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# The Principal Evaluation: Connecting Principals' Evaluation to the Growth and Development Process: A Case Study

Jackie Nielsen

*University of Nebraska-Lincoln*, [jnielsen@bpsnebr.org](mailto:jnielsen@bpsnebr.org)

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The Principal Evaluation: Connecting Principals' Evaluation  
to the Growth and Development Process: A Case Study

by

Jackie Nielsen

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Faculty of  
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The Principal Evaluation: Connecting Principals' Evaluation  
to the Growth and Development Process: A Case Study

Jackie Nielsen, Ed.D.

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Adviser: Kent Mann

With the evolution of the school principal, having an evaluation process which connects a principal's growth and development to make a meaningful impact on their instructional leadership is vital to the success of K-12 education. Data were analyzed to determine if the principal evaluation process aided in the growth and development of the principal and assistant principal administrators. Data were collected in this qualitative case study from multiple sources: interviews, artifacts, observations, and evaluation documents. Seven (7) principals and one (1) assistant principal were interviewed about their perception of how the principal evaluation process connected to their growth and development as instructional leaders in their districts. Interviews took place during the 2017-2018 school year. The principal and assistant principal administrators were from two Class B schools in Nebraska. The two schools served around 2,000 students and have between 6-8 assistant or principal administrators at the K-12 level. Both schools also were located in a similar geographic location in the state of Nebraska, and each school was experiencing a rise in the student population.

The study found that principal and assistant principal perceptions in both districts varied about the impact of the principal evaluation process on their growth and

development as instructional leaders. The principal and assistant principal wanted to grow and develop as strong leaders in their districts. However, the processes were not clearly in place in both districts which created disconnects between the evaluation process and the growth of the principal and assistant principal administrators.

The study concluded that strong principal evaluation processes included high-quality, frequent feedback to support the growth of the principal and assistant principal administrators. In addition, in order to create a strong evaluation process, district leaders must be visible in school buildings to develop strong relationships and a clear understanding of the principal performance.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

“A world-class education system lies at the heart of the American dream. . . . Delivering on this promise is the paramount mission of school leaders today.” (Johnson, 2013, p. 17)

In the elementary and secondary education setting, principals and assistant principals have a direct impact on helping students succeed in the classroom. Principals and assistant principals are a pillar in the educational setting because they can impact teacher efficacy and performance which further increases student achievement. Delivering the promise of the American dream is a direct responsibility of the principal and assistant principal staff. Because the administrative team can have a direct influence on teacher efficacy and performance, how do districts help principals and assistant principals to grow?

Principals are the cornerstone for the educational setting providing guidance and support for their teachers. They have a direct impact on student achievement through their daily interactions with the teaching staff, the curricular choices, and the hiring decisions (Goldhaber, 2007; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Stronge, 2013).

Principals who are strong, effective, responsive leaders help to inspire and enhance the abilities of their teachers and other school staff to do excellent work. Such principals also tend to retain great teachers and create opportunities for them to take on new leadership roles. In short, principals, through their actions, can be powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools. And those practices can contribute much to the success of the nation’s students. (Manna, 2015, p. 7)

The principal and assistant principal do have an impact on instruction and student achievement; therefore, the evaluation process in districts needs to help determine the

effectiveness of principals in the K-12 setting and guide principals to higher performance. “Ideally, a performance evaluation system for principals (or for any other educator) will affect the quality of teaching and learning and support ongoing school improvement” (Stronge, 2013, p. 3). As states continue to structure frameworks for the principal evaluation processes, states must develop sound evaluation models based on teaching and learning standards and professional development models which become a part of the evaluation models to help principals continue to grow. In addition, in order to create a stronger evaluation process, district leaders responsible for the evaluation of principals and assistant principals need to be visible in the school buildings, develop strong relationships with the principals, and model a clear understanding of the principal performance standards.

Even before the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2015, the development of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act in 2001 focused on K-12 accountability where the role of the principal began to evolve and focus on instruction rather than management.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has made a challenging job even more daunting with its requirements to achieve academic gains on a yearly basis and to provide all children with the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Adequately preparing aspiring principals for this new reality has become an immediate priority. (Brown, 2006, p. 525)

The job description for principals has continued to expand from the focus of managing to guiding; “the job of the principal entails much more than administration or enforcing discipline. Principals today must be instructional leaders, hearkening back to public education’s early days when heads of schools were called ‘principal teachers’”

(Mendels & Mitgang, 2013, p. 23). Principals wear many different hats throughout their tenure. They are asked to be more than just the manager of the building. Principals also must “ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction and all educators are held accountable for student learning” (Condon & Clifford, 2012, p. 2). If principals are to ensure all students have access to high-quality instruction, then principals must be provided with feedback, support, and professional development to grow. The process of the evaluation is key in providing principal and assistant principals with support to help them grow. Districts must continue to search for ways to help principals grow professionally as part of the evaluation process so they can meet the challenges of the post NCLB learning experience.

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2015, the development of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has placed more emphasis on principal development and evaluation than NCLB previously did. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the focus of Title II is Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers, Principals, or other School Leaders (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015).

While the overall purpose of Title II remains the same between NCLB and ESSA (i.e., preparing, training and recruiting high quality teachers, principals, and other school leaders), the level of specificity and inclusion of research-based strategies aimed specifically at principals sets ESSA apart. ESSA has the advantage of being informed by over a decade of practice and research on effective principal preparation and development strategies. ESSA provides guidance to states and districts that seek to improve principal quality. (Haller, Hunt, Pacha, & Fazekas, 2016, p. 5)

A principal evaluation process is one aspect which can help principals grow as individuals and address the needs of the students and the school. Currently,

the research to date on principal evaluation also suggests that many state and district evaluations do not reflect existing principal standards or proven practices, and many principal evaluation instruments are neither technically sound nor useful for improving principal performance—despite the proven importance of the principal to school and student success. (NASSP, 2016, p. 2)

Christopher Condon and Matthew Clifford (2012) also reinforce the need to analyze the evaluation process and the standards utilized to measure proficiency in principal evaluations, “Districts’ principal performance assessments may or may not be aligned with existing professional standards” (p. 1). In order to improve student achievement, states and districts must search for meaningful processes to help increase the effectiveness of principal and assistant principal leaders.

In *Principal Evaluation: A Framework for Principal Evaluation*, James Stronge (2013) provides more depth to the lack of research and development in this area,

One comprehensive study of principal leadership evaluation practices in the United States indicated that although states and districts focus on a variety of performance areas (such as management, external environments, or personal traits) when evaluating their principals, they have very limited coverage of leadership behaviors that ensure rigorous curriculum and quality instruction. (pp. 6-7)

Along with the lack of processes to evaluate principals, “an even greater concern is that many principals and assistant principals are never formally evaluated in any meaningful way” (NASSP, 2016, p. 2). This provides more concerns with the implementation of performance-based measures to evaluate principals. If principals and assistant principals are not evaluated through a meaningful process focused on improving instructional leadership, the impact on student achievement will be lost.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study will be to examine how the principal evaluation process, intended to help principals grow as instructional leaders, continues to evolve in Nebraska K-12 schools. As principal evaluations continue to be developed, states and districts are continuing to create sound processes to evaluate principals based on legislation and standards. These processes must provide principals with feedback and support to help them grow professionally so they continue to be a positive influence on the student learning in the school setting.

This case study will be to explore the principal perceptions in two Class B schools in Nebraska evaluating how the principal appraisal process connects to the principal's professional learning in the K-12 setting. Two Nebraska Class B schools have been selected based on size and location. Schools in Nebraska which are Class B fall into the second largest classification of schools and serve approximately 250-900 students in the high school. Each school serves around 2,000 students and has between six to eight assistant or principal administrators at the K-12 level. Both schools also are located in a similar geographic location in the state of Nebraska, and each school is experiencing a rise in the student population. The case study will focus on the third key indicator, Professional Development, in the Nebraska Framework for Principal Evaluation. The four key indicators of the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) framework include (NDE, 2012):

1. assess principal's impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;

3. professional development linked to evaluation ; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska frameworks.

### **Context**

With most new initiatives in education, the initiatives are developed at the federal level and then implemented at the state and local level. This study focuses on the local initiatives in the state of Nebraska intended to develop and implement an evaluation process which provides feedback to support principal professional growth and is based on the current legislation and K-12 principal standards.

“In January 2011, the Nebraska State Board of Education authorized the drafting of possible performance standards for teachers and principals” (NDE, 2012). The Nebraska performance standards for principals were influenced by the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) policy standards which are currently the 2015 Professional Standards for Education Leaders. In February 2012, the Nebraska State Board of Education authorized Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) “to develop teacher and principal evaluation models for voluntary use by local districts” (NDE, 2012). NDE developed a model which focused on four key areas (NDE, 2012):

1. assess principal’s impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;
3. professional development linked to evaluation ; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska frameworks.



Along with the framework in Nebraska, many national frameworks also serve to guide districts in the development of principal evaluation processes which meet the current legislation and will be considered as this study is conducted. Other professional frameworks evaluated as well will be the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders, James Stronge's Principal Performance Standards, and Robert Marzano's Principal Evaluation Framework.

### **Conceptual Framework**

During the development of the Nebraska Department of Education framework, the state evaluated many different frameworks to guide their development of the Nebraska Principal Framework. One framework which the state utilized to guide the development of the framework is the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 Policy Standards now the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders. These standards will be a part of the study as we understand the process districts have taken to develop an evaluation process for K-12 principals.

In 2015, the ISLLC standards were revised to create the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders through a partnership between the Wallace Foundation and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The standards were revised because "the world in which schools operate today is very different from the one of just a few years ago—and all signs point to more change ahead" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 1). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration noted several conditions which have changed driving the revision of the standards. Some

of these changes are focused around globalization, technology, family structures and demographics, educational politics, school funding, and higher accountability.

While these changes are providing challenges, the National Policy Board (2015) also noted, “At the same time they present rich and exciting opportunities for educational leaders to innovate and inspire staff to pursue new, creative approaches for improving schools and promoting student learning.” With these changes and these opportunities, educational leaders needed new standards “to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 1).

These standards are included to highlight the evolution of principal frameworks. Two other frameworks will be utilized to provide additional depth in the research about school leader evaluation models. These frameworks will include Robert Marzano’s School Leader Evaluation Model Rubric (2012) and James Stronge’s Principal Performance Standards (2013).

The Nebraska Principal Framework focused on the four key areas (NDE, 2012):

1. assess principal’s impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;
3. professional development linked to evaluation ; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska

frameworks.

The ISLLC standards include 6 standards to help strengthen school leaders. These standards were revised in 2015 and the 10 new standards have been included as well to

highlight the difference and to add to the research depth of principal frameworks. Robert Marzano's School Leader Evaluation Model Rubric (2012) focuses on 5 domains which contains 29 elements to describe each domain. James Stronge's Principal Performance Standards Model (2013) focuses on seven performance standards. All frameworks are identified in Table 1.

Table 1

*Principal Frameworks*

<b>Nebraska Principal Framework (2011)</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vision for Learning</li> <li>2. Continuous School Improvement</li> <li>3. Instructional Leadership</li> <li>4. Culture for Learning</li> <li>5. Systems Management</li> <li>6. Staff Leadership</li> <li>7. Developing Relationships</li> <li>8. Professional Ethics and Advocacy</li> </ol>
<b>Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) (2008)</b>
<p>A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.</li> <li>• advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.</li> <li>• ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.</li> <li>• collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.</li> <li>• acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.</li> <li>• understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Standards for Educational Leaders 2015 (Formerly ISLLC)</b>
<p>Standard 1: Mission, Vision, and Core Values</p> <p>Standard 2: Ethics and Professional Norms</p> <p>Standard 3: Equity and Cultural Responsiveness</p> <p>Standard 4: Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment</p> <p>Standard 5: Community of Care and Support for Students</p> <p>Standard 6: Professional Capacity of School Personnel</p> <p>Standard 7: Professional Community for Teachers and Staff</p> <p>Standard 8: Meaningful Engagement of Families and Community</p> <p>Standard 9: Operations and Management</p> <p>Standard 10: School Improvement</p>

Table 1 continues

<b>Marzano School Leader Evaluation Model Rubric</b>	
Domain I: A Data Driven Focus on Student Achievement Domain II: Continuous Improvement of Instruction Domain III: A Guaranteed and Viable Curriculum Domain IV: Cooperation and Collaboration Domain V: School Climate	
<b>The Principal Performance Standards: Stronge</b>	
1.	Instructional Leadership
2.	School Climate
3.	Human Resources Leadership
4.	Organizational Management
5.	Communication and Community Relations
6.	Professionalism
7.	Student Progress

## Research Question and Study Design Overview

As Mendels and Mitgang noted, “Principal assessment is in the midst of overdue change” (2013, p. 26). The state of Nebraska realized the importance of the principal and the necessity to provide them with a structure which helped to guide them in their development when they developed the Nebraska Principal Framework. This study will extend the work conducted by Dr. Jennifer Lynn Bethman (2015) in her dissertation, *The principal evaluation process: Principals' learning as a result of the evaluation process*. Bethman focused on the principal evaluation in Washington State in a district of approximately 20,000 students. This current study will focus on two Nebraska Class B school districts with six to eight assistant or principal administrators which are implementing changes in the K-12 principal evaluation processes to provide feedback and support to help principals continue to grow professionally. Schools in Nebraska which are Class B fall into the second largest classification of schools and serve approximately 250-900 students in the high school. Both schools serve approximately 2,000 students and have between six to eight assistant or principal administrators at the

K-12 level. Both schools also are located in a similar geographic location in the state of Nebraska, and each school is experiencing a rise in the student population. Another similarity between both schools is they utilize the Marzano instructional model with their assistant principals and principals.

The impact of the principal evaluation process on helping principals learn will be understood through the primary research and secondary research questions. The primary and secondary questions were developed to provide an understanding of the methods utilized in a district to ensure strong leaders were provided feedback and guidance through their evaluation framework.

**Primary research question.** What is the principals' perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?

**Secondary research questions.**

1. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?
3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

Creswell noted, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2014, p. 4). The researcher will conduct a qualitative case study to evaluate the primary and secondary questions noted above. The qualitative approach with the constructivist

perspective was chosen because this study is meant to understand the context of the world we live in by constructing meaning of a phenomenon through discussions, interactions, and views with the participants (Creswell, 2014; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

As J. Amos Hatch notes in *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*, the constructivist view “argues that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (2002, p. 15). During this study, the researcher will seek to understand the principal evaluation and development process through the lens of the principal as he/she navigates the system during the daily routines of K-12 education. The researcher will utilize interviews, observations, and artifacts to gather data to help understand how principals perceive the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning. These artifacts will provide a rich depth of understanding about the central phenomenon.

Creswell continues to note the qualitative approach with a constructive perspective is based on “the researcher’s intent . . . to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (2014, p. 8). Through the constructivist paradigm the researcher tends to not be distant and objective; the researcher and participants construct the reality together through mutual engagement (Hatch, 2002). The approach also allows the exploration of “human behaviors within the contexts of their natural occurrence . . . [while seeking] to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it” (Hatch, 2002, p. 7).

A Case Study approach was chosen because “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). This study is interested in understanding the K-12 principals’ experiences with the implementation of a principal evaluation process. Through this study, the researcher will explore the stories of the principals and seek to understand them (Stake, 1995). The rationale for utilizing a case study approach is this study focuses on a particular contemporary phenomenon (ESSA legislation and the Nebraska Principal Framework development) which has specific boundaries (within the last three years) (Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). A case study relies on multiple data sources to build an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, Hanson, Plano-Clark, & Morales, 2007; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014).

### **Assumptions**

Assumptions in this study will include: the principals whom this study will focus on were able to accurately reflect on what the evaluation process entails, the principal evaluation tool was tied to the model utilized for teacher evaluation, and the principals will provide accurate and honest answers.

### **Definition of Terms**

CCSSO—Council of Chief State School Officers is a nonpartisan, nationwide, nonprofit organization of public officials who head departments of elementary and secondary education. They provide leadership, advocacy, and technical assistance on major educational issues. The CCSSO helped to create the ISLLC 2008 Policy Standards and the revision – Professional Standards for Educational Leaders of 2015.

*CLASS B*—Nebraska state classification system developed by the Nebraska School Activities Association based on the student enrollment in a K-12 system. The current classification system has K-12 systems identified as Class A, B, C-1, C-2, D-1, and D-2. Schools in Nebraska which are Class B fall into the second largest classification of schools and serve approximately 250-900 students in the high school.

*ESEA*—The federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) was established in 1965 and devoted to providing equal opportunity for all students. It is the nation's education law and continues to show the federal government's commitment to all subgroups. This Act was part of President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society Program and created a clear role for the federal government in K-12 education and policy. This legislation provided Title I funds to help school close the achievement gap.

*ESSA*—(S.1177 Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015) ESSA is the federal accountability system which reauthorizes and amends the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 (ESEA). This current reauthorization addresses issues such as accountability, assessment, teacher and principal evaluation. This ESSA was part of Barack Obama's educational policy which helped to reduce federal oversight and increase the flexibility of the state.

*Evaluation*—A framework which utilizes a process to define the skills and knowledge which must be demonstrated at all aspects of a career.

*ISLLC* (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium of 2008)—ISLLC standards were created by the CCSSO to provide leadership expectations for state and local leaders in the educational setting. These standards were developed to provide



benchmarks and set high expectations for educational leaders during a time of increasing accountability through NCLB.

*Instructional Leader*—K-12 educational leaders who provide leadership to improve the quality of teaching which directly impacts the quality of student learning and achievement.

*NCLB*—(No Child Left Behind Act of 2001) NCLB was the legislation providing an update to the ESEA which was established in 1965. It provided more federal oversight of states with the accountability and assessment. NCLB was signed into law by President George W. Bush and it grew out of concern that schools were failing and falling behind other countries.

*Nebraska Principal Performance Framework*—This framework identifies effective practices to improve teaching and learning. The framework focuses on the role of the principal and is a model for districts in the state of Nebraska. The framework is dividing into two elements: a broad Effective Practice followed and Example Indicators. The indicators help to clarify the Effective Practices.

*2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders*—The Professional Standards for Education Leaders were formerly the ISLLC standards. The standards were revised in 2015. The revised standards were developed with a partnership through the Wallace Foundation and focus on leaders improving student achievement and meeting higher educational standards.

**Delimitations**

The delimitations of this study are the focus of principals in the state of Nebraska who have an experience with the connection of the principal evaluation processes to the professional development. With limited funds and time, principals in Nebraska will be the primary focal point of the study. Although the researcher will be interviewing principals and assistant principals in Nebraska who have experience with the connection of the evaluation process and their professional growth, the researcher will ensure that the study reaches saturation of data through the interviews and the artifacts. The population will include principals in Class B school districts because of their location with 1,800 to 2,200 students, six to eight principal and assistant principal administrators, similarities in principal evaluation systems, and their connection between evaluation processes and professional growth.

**Limitations**

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of K-12 principals who have experienced a connection between principal evaluation processes and professional development. It does not focus on the entire principal population in the state of Nebraska, nor does it focus on a longitudinal study of the impact of principal evaluation on principal development and growth. This study will focus on Class B district profiles with similar locations, student enrollment data between 1,800 to 2,200, number of assistant and principal administrators, similarities in principal evaluation systems, and their connection between evaluation and professional growth. The Class B system in the state of Nebraska is the second largest classification of schools and contains approximately 950 – 250

students in grades ninth through twelfth. Additionally, this study only seeks to understand how principal evaluation has become a part of the growth and development process for principals in the K-12 Nebraska setting. In order for principals to improve as leaders of their buildings, the evaluation process must be tied to the professional growth and development. Principals play important roles in their buildings and their growth and development as an instructional leader is key.

### **Significance of the Study**

With the reauthorization of ESEA in 2015, the role of the principal is becoming more clearly defined. “A growing research literature has shown the multidimensional roles principals play in keeping schools operational and safe, and in fostering productive work cultures where teachers and staff can serve students as they pursue their academic goals” (Manna, 2015, p. 7). Federal, state, and local educational entities also are beginning to understand “Leadership is second only to teaching among school-related influences on student success” (Manna, 2015, p. 5).

This study needs to be conducted because “school principals play a critical role in school improvement and students’ academic success” (Shelton, 2013, p. 1). Stronge (2013) notes, “principals exert both direct and indirect influences on schools and the people who work and learn there. Thus, the framework of principal effectiveness should not only contain standards related to the processes of leadership, but also to the outcomes” (pp. 58-59). Principals have a greater impact on changing instructional practices in the classroom which can directly impact student achievement. As Mendels

and Mitgang noted, “Principal assessment is in the midst of overdue change” (2013, p. 26). The National Association of Elementary and School Principals noted as well,

It’s time for a new framework for evaluating principals’ performance—one that reflects the complexity of the principalship, measures principals’ leadership competencies required for student and school success, and seeks out the insight and experience that only practicing principals can bring to bear. (Clifford & Ross, 2011, p. 1)

School leadership evaluation frameworks and processes need to be evaluated and modified to help school leaders improve their leadership capacity through feedback and professional development.

The purpose of this case study will be to determine if, or to what extent, K-12 principals believe the principal evaluation process actually influences the principal’s professional learning. If schools are to help their leaders grow and develop, leaders must have sound evaluation practices to provide them with feedback and professional development. Research shows the importance of the leader in the educational setting and this study will focus on the perceptions of how the evaluation is being utilized to help the principals grow in their current position.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Instructional Leadership and Principal Evaluation

In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Micheal Fullan writes, “Leaders are not born, they are nurtured” (2004, p. 196). Effective principal evaluation processes can help nurture leaders in these positions so they can have a greater impact on student achievement. As noted in *Instructional Capacity: How to Build it Right*, Ann Jaquith discusses the role of the principal in building the instructional capacity of the teacher. She notes, “Principals can increase the instructional capacity of their schools by creating opportunities for teachers to collaborate as they use key resources to improve teaching and learning” (2013, p. 56), and continues, “School leaders must create conditions that enable teachers to learn from others and incorporate others’ expertise into their own instructional repertoire” (2013, p. 59). Both of these components expand on the need to help develop principals in becoming strong instructional leaders through feedback, evaluation, and professional growth.

With principal evaluation, the main purpose is to see change in student achievement and teacher performance through the leadership of the principal. However, Stronge noted, “Unfortunately, there is little connection between principals’ evaluation results and the quality of their work” (2013, p. 3). Currently, meaningful principal evaluation processes are not necessarily a common practice. Stronge continues to note that “too often, meaningful principal evaluation is the exception rather than the rule”

(2013, p. 3). If principal evaluation provides principals with leadership practices, feedback, and professional growth, change in buildings can begin to occur.

In *The Principal Evaluation Process: Principals' Learning as a Result of the Evaluation Process* (2015), Dr. Jennifer Lynn Bethman's research identifies many components which make the principal evaluation process more meaningful for principal and assistant principal administrators. Bethman identifies a system with ongoing conversations, collaboration, and support as key components in the evaluation process to improve principal and assistant principal administrator capacity.

The dissertation by Melissa J. Poloncic, *Principals Matter: Perceptions of Principals on School Leadership* highlights the findings of principals defining capacities to help them develop as leaders. "Principals all identified personal pursuits they had identified for themselves to develop. Their needs centered around two main themes, how to develop as an instructional leader and how to communicate to influence others" (2016, p. 60). Principals desire to develop as instructional leaders so they can continue to lead in the K-12 setting. She continues, "The principal viewpoint of meaningful learning experiences focused around two main themes: learning from others, and applying what they learned" (2016, p. 60).

In Stronge's text, *A Framework for Principal Evaluation*, he notes,

One comprehensive study of principal leadership evaluation practices in the United States indicated that although states and districts focus on a variety of performance areas (such as management, external environment, or personal traits) when evaluating their principals, they have very limited coverage of leadership behaviors that ensure rigorous curriculum and quality instruction. (2013, p. 7)

With systems in place which are focused on the managerial aspects of the principal position, it is hard to identify areas of development and growth to help principals move forward. “. . . unless we have effective evaluation systems in place that accurately differentiate performance, we simply can’t even discern whether or not we have effective principals” (Stronge, 2013, p. 6).

Mendels and Mitgang note, “Principal assessment is in the midst of overdue change” (2013, p. 26). In *Creating Strong Principals*, both authors continue to describe aspects of the change which would be relevant in placing the instructional leadership first. Two objectives noted by the authors “to strengthen school leadership: (1) building a pipeline of new principals who are ready to tackle the most underperforming school and (2) fully supporting those leaders, especially during their novice years” (p. 24). The evaluation process can be a way to build principals while providing them with support through feedback and professional growth.

In *Assessing the Effectiveness of School Leaders: New Directions and New Processes* (Portin, 2009), the following four components are described as a part of the change for principal assessment:

1. A focus on ‘driver’ behaviors that improve instruction and promote necessary school change, anchored in standards.
2. Shared authority and responsibility for improving learning.
3. Reliable, tested instruments.
4. Adaptable to different purposes and contexts. (pp. 4-7)

Bradley Portin (2009) continues, “An assessment does not tell the principal or her supervisor what actions to take. Used and interpreted well, however, it can point to the principal’s specific strengths and limitations and help prioritize different areas of

leadership performance depending on the particular context and needs of her school” (p. 7).

From these strengths and limitations, the evaluation process may be utilized as an avenue to promote instructional growth through professional learning. In the dissertation by Lisa L. Green, *Principals' Perceptions Of Professional Development: Options That Support Effective Leadership* (2016), Green studied the effect of professional development promoting strong leadership. One of the findings which resonated throughout the study is “Professional development that is collaborative, mentor supported with a one-on-one-coaching component is recommended to better support principals as they seek personal growth” (p. 159). In order to ensure educational leaders are being developed, the evaluation process must link to the professional learning. Green continues, “In addition, the most effective professional development is structured in a manner that accommodates principals’ various learning modalities, is offered in array of formats, and that fosters networking, collaboration, and affective support” (p. 159).

In *How Leadership Influences Student Learning*, Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) discuss the importance of educational leadership on the impact of student learning.

The chance of any reform improving student learning is remote unless district and school leaders agree with its purposes and appreciate what is required to make it work. . . . So “effective” or “successful” leadership is critical to school reform.  
(p. 4)

In the review of research, Leithwood et al (2004) found support to justify two claims:

“(1) Leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school, and (2) Leadership effects are usually



largest where and when they are needed most” (p. 5). The first claim resonates multiple times throughout numerous research which reinforces the need to develop a strong process to evaluate principals by providing them with feedback and support because improving leadership is “key to the successful implementation of large-scale reform” (p. 5)

These authors, as well as others noted in the study, believe in supporting principals through the evaluation process to help them grow and develop as an instructional leader. Principals need to know how to build, lead, and support teams of instructional experts who can combine their expertise, conduct teaching experiments, learn together from these experiments, and continually improve instruction. Given the dynamic context of schools, central offices have an important role to play. They must create district learning conditions that support school leaders as they work with teams to generate the instructional capacity our schools need. (Jaquith, 2013, p. 61)

### **Evolution of the Principal**

Kate Rousmaniere (2013) paints a picture of the principal’s position in *The Principal: The Most Misunderstood Person in All of Education*. The picture she portrays defines the complexities of the principal position.

The principal is both the administrative director of state educational policy and a building manager, both an advocate for school change and the protector of bureaucratic stability. Authorized to be employer, supervisor, professional figurehead, and inspirational leader, the principal’s core training and identity is as a classroom teacher. (para 2)

Rousmaniere (2013) continues, “Located between the school and the district, and serving both, the principal has historically been a middle manager who translates education policy from the central office to the classroom” (para 4). Each of these images represent the evolution of the K-12 principal.

In the K-12 educational setting, the principal position has slowly evolved during the last 10 to 20 years into a position which is more dynamic and ever-changing.

The job of a modern-day principal has transformed into something that would be almost unrecognizable to the principals of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The concept of the principal as a building manager has given way to a model where the principal is an aspirational leader, a team builder, a coach, and an agent of visionary change. (Alvoid & Black, 2014, para 2)

James Stronge notes, “In addition to holding the largely managerial responsibilities of the past, today’s principals are expected to lead their schools, increase student learning, and help staff to grow professionally” (2013, p. 7)

Additionally, Mendels and Mitgang note, “the job of the principal entails much more than administration or enforcing discipline. Principals today must be instructional leaders, hearkening back to public education’s early days when heads of schools were called ‘principal teachers’” (2013, p. 23). They continue,

Principals need to (1) champion teacher and staff excellence through a focus on continual improvement, (2) create powerful professional learning systems that guarantee learning for children, (3) build a culture focused on college and career readiness, (4) empower and motivate families and the community to become engaged, (5) relentlessly pursue self-disciplined thinking and action, and (6) lead their schools toward achieving their vision. (pp. 24)

However, “As the principalship evolved away from the classroom to the administrative office, the principal became less connected with student learning, and yet more responsible for it” (Rousmaniere, 2013, p. 10).

Principals are the cornerstone for the educational setting providing guidance and support for their teachers. They have a direct impact on student achievement through their daily interactions with the teaching staff, the curricular choices, and the hiring decisions (Goldhaber, 2007; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Stronge, 2013).

Principals who are strong, effective, responsive leaders help to inspire and enhance the abilities of their teachers and other school staff to do excellent work. Such principals also tend to retain great teachers and create opportunities for them to take on new leadership roles. In short, principals, through their actions, can be powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools. And those practices can contribute much to the success of the nation's students. (Manna, 2015, p. 7)

In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Michael Fullan notes the difference between leadership and management. "Leadership and management often overlap, but one difference between them is that leadership is needed for problems that do not have easy answers" (2004, p. 2). He continues,

The outcome of effective leadership and commitment is that "more good things happen" and "fewer bad things happen". . . . In schools, good things are enhanced student performance, increased capacity of teachers, greater involvement of parents and community members, engagement of students, satisfaction and enthusiasm about going further, and greater pride for all in the system. (2004, pp. 7-8)

The role of the principal requires leaders who understand the complexities of the role and provide leadership to build staff efficacy. The principal position has evolved as being more focused on instructional leadership while the management components are no longer in the forefront. Bethman (2015) notes,

The way principals are evaluated is changing. The criteria used to evaluate them is changing, and specifically the process used to evaluate them is changing. Ultimately, the principal evaluation process is supporting the change in the principal's role from principal as a manager to principal as an instructional leader. (p. 107)

In *Creating Strong Principals*, Mendels and Mitgang (2013) received a correspondence from Daniel Domenech, executive director of the American Association of School Administrators. The correspondence noted, "Any school system superintendent who views his or her principal more as a manager than an educational leader is making a

huge mistake” (p. 23). This personal communication from Domenech continues to reinforce the shift from manager to instructional leader. It also reinforces the need to provide high quality feedback through a strong evaluation process to principal and assistant principal administrators about educational leadership.

Principals also must “ensure that all students have access to high-quality instruction and all educators are held accountable for student learning” (Condon & Clifford, 2012, p. 2).

It isn’t enough to competently manage the schools we currently have. Teachers, principals, and district administrators are now charged with finding effective ways to teach all students to high levels—including students from economically disadvantaged homes, those with special needs, and those with limited English skills. (Johnson, 2013, p. 17)

As noted earlier, James Stronge highlights the lack of research and development with the principal evaluation process. This lack of research and development continues to push a more managerial approach with principals rather than a focus on instructional leadership. Along with the lack of research and processes to evaluate principals, “an even greater concern is that many principals and assistant principals are never formally evaluated in any meaningful way” (NASSP, 2016, p. 2). This provides more concerns with the implementation of strong evaluation processes to provide feedback to promote growth and development with principal and assistant principal administrators.

### **Evolving Legislation**

With most new initiatives in education, the initiatives are developed at the federal level and then implemented at the state and local level. Federal legislation has helped the principal position evolve in its current description. In 2001, The No Child Left Behind

(NCLB) Act scaled up the process of holding schools accountable for student performance. This movement increased the accountability for schools, but even more increased the accountability on principals to create systems which are focused on increasing and maintaining high student achievement.

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act has made a challenging job even more daunting with its requirements to achieve academic gains on a yearly basis and to provide all children with the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education. Adequately preparing aspiring principals for this new reality has become an immediate priority. (Brown, 2006, p. 525).

This development was the beginning of seeing the role of the principal evolve focusing more on instruction than management.

With the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) in 2015, the development of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has placed more emphasis on principal development and evaluation than NCLB previously did. According to the U.S. Department of Education, the focus of Title II is Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers, Principals, or other School Leaders (Every Student Succeeds Act, 2015).

While the overall purpose of Title II remains the same between NCLB and ESSA (i.e., preparing, training and recruiting high quality teachers, principals, and other school leaders), the level of specificity and inclusion of research-based strategies aimed specifically at principals sets ESSA apart. ESSA has the advantage of being informed by over a decade of practice and research on effective principal preparation and development strategies. ESSA provides guidance to states and districts that seek to improve principal quality. (Haller et al., 2016, p. 5)

### **Principal Evaluation Frameworks and Principal Standards**

An effective principal evaluation process is a key piece to improving and helping leaders grow through feedback and professional development. Stronge notes, “The

purpose of a quality principal evaluation system is to support the principal's growth and development while simultaneously holding him or her accountable for student success" (2013, p. 8).

Michael Fullan (2004) describes foundational strategies to help leaders continue to grow and thrive in his text, *Leading in a Culture of Change*. One element critical to the success of the leader is that learning and growth happens within the context of the leader's position. Fullan writes, "learning in the setting in which you work (in context) is learning with the greatest payoff because it is more specific (customized to the situation) and social (involves the group)" (p. 191). He continues, "Learning in context develops leadership and improves the organization as you go along; it changes the individual and the context simultaneously" (p. 191). In order to see change within the leader, principal evaluation processes must provide specific feedback and support in relation to the organizational system. Moving from feedback about managerial components to instructional leadership help principal supervisors provide this feedback.

In *Creating Strong Principals*, an example of a framework is taken from a public school district in Chicago, Illinois (Mendels & Mitgang, 2013). The framework contained six competencies to help principals grow and develop as instructional leaders. The six competencies principals must place front and center are to:

1. champion teacher and staff excellence through a focus on continual improvement,
2. create powerful professional learning systems that guarantee learning for children,
3. build a culture focused on college and career readiness,
4. empower and motivate families and the community to become engaged,
5. relentlessly pursue self-disciplined thinking and action, and
6. lead their schools toward achieving their vision. (p. 24)

In these six competencies, the focus of professional growth is seen in each competency.

A blog found in Education Week discussed the idea of coaching as part of the principal framework. Peter DeWitt (2016) provided the following question for readers to consider: “If instructional coaching is beneficial to teachers, shouldn’t leadership coaching be beneficial to principals?” (para 1). This is a key question DeWitt evaluates during his article; it is also a key aspect for principal evaluation process. “There are leaders who believe that coaching can be just as important for them as it is for teachers. This is the collaborative, growth and innovative mindset leaders should have” (DeWitt, 2016, para 7). Providing experiences to coach principals is critical to helping leaders grow in the principal position. “Building synergy among leaders and getting them to try new strategies to build collective efficacy among their staff is something coaches can help do, and they often offer an outside perspective because they have worked with many other leaders” (DeWitt, 2016, para 11).

Defining the principal standards to focus the principal evaluation process is critical to develop and adopt comprehensive standards which help guide states and districts in their development and planning. “In January 2011, the Nebraska State Board of Education authorized the drafting of possible performance standards for teachers and principals” (NDE, 2012). The Nebraska performance standards for principals were influenced by the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) policy standards which have revised to the 2015 Professional Standards for Educational Leaders.

The standards were revised because “the world in which schools operate today is very different from the one of just a few years ago—and all signs point to more change

ahead” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015, p. 1). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration noted several conditions which have changed driving the revision of the standards. Some of these changes are focused around globalization, technology, family structures and demographics, educational politics, school funding, and higher accountability.

While these changes are providing challenges, the National Policy Board (2015) also noted, “At the same time they present rich and exciting opportunities for educational leaders to innovate and inspire staff to pursue new, creative approaches for improving schools and promoting student learning” (p. 1). With these changes and these opportunities, educational leaders needed new standards “to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students” (National Policy Board, 2015, p. 1).

In February 2012, the Nebraska State Board of Education authorized Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) “to develop teacher and principal evaluation models for voluntary use by local districts” (NDE, 2012). NDE developed a model which focused on four key areas:

1. assess principal’s impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;
3. professional development linked to evaluation; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska Frameworks.



With the development of the leadership standards, schools are provided a framework to build a strong and effective principal evaluation model to help promote growth and development of principals. Mendels and Mitgang note, “The point is that leadership standards only come to life when districts actually use them to shape how they select, hire, train, and evaluate school leaders” (2013, p. 24).

### **Best Practices for Principal Evaluation**

As leaders are creating models for principal evaluation processes, leaders must begin to examine best practices. In *The Changing Role of the Principal: How High-Achieving Districts are Recalibrating School Leadership*, case studies of six K-12 school districts were conducted and then evaluated for the best practices (Alvoid & Black, 2014). In the findings, Alvoid and Black noted eight professional-development recommendations for districts to enhance assistant and principal administrators’ practices:

1. Redesign school organizational charts and job descriptions.
2. Develop instructional leadership capacity around the principal.
3. Focus on principal training on coaching teachers.
4. Build the capacity of central-office administrators to support principals.
5. Provide regular opportunities for principals to gather around self-selected problems of practice.
6. Develop partnerships with universities and nonprofits to recruit and train future principals.
7. Develop and train principals on district-wide teaching and leadership frameworks.
8. Provide technological supports that allow administrators to record and share instructional data. (2014, para 8).

With the impact administration has on the educational setting, the evaluation system needs to help determine the effectiveness of principals in the K-12 setting.

“Ideally, a performance evaluation system for principals (or for any other educator) will

affect the quality of teaching and learning and support ongoing school improvement” (Stronge, 2013, p. 3). As states continue to structure frameworks for the principal evaluation processes, states must develop sound evaluation models based on teaching and learning standards and professional development models which become a part of the evaluation models to help principals continue to grow.

During the development of the Nebraska Department of Education framework, the state evaluated many different frameworks to guide their development of the Nebraska Principal Framework (NDE, 2012). One framework which the state utilized to guide the development of the framework is the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) 2008 Policy Standards (NDE, 2012). Both of these documents will be a part of the study as we understand the process districts have taken to develop an evaluation process for K-12 principals.

In 2015, the ISLLC standards were revised to create the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders through a partnership between the Wallace Foundation and the Council of Chief State School Officers (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). These standards are included to highlight the evolution of principal framework. The revision of the standards created a more focused approach for educational leaders. The ten standards are components of a leader’s responsibilities with the majority of the standards focusing on instructional leadership. The standard, Operations and Management, comprises only 10% of the standards. Two other frameworks will be utilized to provide additional depth in the research about school leader evaluation models. These frameworks will include Robert Marzano’s School

Leader Evaluation Model Rubric (2012) and James Stronge's Principal Performance Standards (2013).

The Nebraska Principal Framework focused on the four key areas:

1. assess principal's impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;
3. professional development linked to evaluation; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska Frameworks. (NDE, 2012)

The ISLLC standards include ten standards to help strengthen school leaders (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2015). These standards were revised in 2015 and the new standards have been included as well to highlight the difference and add to the research depth of principal frameworks. Robert Marzano's School Leader Evaluation Model Rubric (2012) focuses on 5 domains which contains 29 elements to describe each domain. James Stronge's Principal Performance Standards (2013) focuses on 7 performance standards.

The Stronge Evaluation Framework (2012) contains indicators which "are not prescriptive; rather, the indicators serve as examples of quality performance within the given standard" (p. 1). This framework "acknowledges the complexities of the job; thus, multiple data sources are necessary to provide for a comprehensive and authentic 'performance portrait' of the principal's work" (Stronge, 2012, p. 2). It also includes self-reflection which is "one of the strongest attributes for fostering professional growth and improvement" (Stronge, 2012, p. 3).

Stronge's Evaluation Framework (2013) includes six performance standards related to principal behaviors and a seventh standard related to student progress. These

six practices identified in Table 1 “reflect the empirical research regarding what principals should know and be able to do” (p. 54). The seventh standard “requires that principals be evaluated based on the results of their work” (p. 54). Because principals have a direct impact on student learning through their leadership, Stronge continues, “the framework of principal effectiveness should not only contain standards related to the processes of leadership but also to the outcomes” (p. 59).

With each component in Stronge’s evaluation framework (2013), it is necessary to guide principal growth through feedback and support. “The goal is to support the continuous growth and development of each principal by monitoring, analyzing, and applying pertinent data compiled within a system of meaningful feedback” (p. 65).

Support for continuous growth through meaningful feedback is imperative to principal leadership and development. The evaluation system would also,

reflect the fundamental role that effective communication plays in every aspect of the process. Because the goal of any evaluation is either to ensure that successful job performance continues to improve less successful performance, effective communication between the evaluator and the principal is essential. (Stronge, 2013, p. 95)

The Marzano Principal Evaluation Framework is “designed to correspond to a teacher evaluation framework to maximize impact on raising student achievement” (Learning Sciences International, 2016, para 1). The model “develops effective school administrators with an unwavering focus on driving student achievement” (para 3) and provides “strategies and tools to empower their teachers so leaders and teachers can focus to gather on the ultimate objective: improving student learning” (para 3). As Marzano notes in *The Two Purposes of Teacher Evaluation*, one important characteristic for

teacher development is the system “employs a scale or rubric that teachers can use to guide and track their skill development” (2012, p. 18). Just as teachers evaluations must have these components, administrative systems need to have scales and rubrics which help guide their professional growth and development.

These models (found in Table 1) help to provide multiple frameworks which highlight the move to construct evaluation processes based on standards focusing on instructional leadership. The role of the principal has changed and the frameworks for evaluation are changing as well.

The principal evaluation process is one aspect which can help principals grow as individuals and address the needs of the students and the school. Currently,

the research to date on principal evaluation also suggests that many state and district evaluations do not reflect existing principal standards or proven practices, and many principal evaluation instruments are neither technically sound nor useful for improving principal performance—despite the proven importance of the principal to school and student success. (NASSP, 2016, p. 2).

Christopher Condon and Matthew Clifford also reinforce the need to analyze the evaluation process and the standards utilized to measure proficiency in principal evaluations, “Districts’ principal performance assessments may or may not be aligned with existing professional standards” (2012, p. 1). In order for districts and schools to move forward, assistant and principal administrators’ evaluation reform must become a focal point where districts are providing feedback and professional growth opportunities to support growth as an instructional leader.

## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

#### Research Questions

As Mendels and Mitgang noted, “Principal assessment is in the midst of overdue change” (2013, p. 26). The state of Nebraska realized the importance of the revision of assistant and principal administrator evaluation standards and the necessity to provide a structure which helped guide principals and assistant principals in their professional development. As a result, the Nebraska Principal Framework was developed. This study will continue the work conducted by Dr. Jennifer Lynn Bethman (2015) in her dissertation, *The Principal Evaluation Process: Principals' Learning as a Result of the Evaluation Process*. Bethman focused on the principal evaluation process in Washington State in a district of approximately 20,000 students. This study will focus on Nebraska school districts which are implementing changes in the K-12 principal evaluation process to provide feedback and support to help principals continue to grow professionally.

The impact of the principal evaluation process on helping principals learn will be understood through the primary and secondary questions below. The primary and secondary questions were developed to provide an understanding of the methods utilized in a district to ensure strong leaders were provided feedback and guidance through their evaluation framework.

**Primary research question.** What is the principals' perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?

### **Secondary research questions.**

1. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?
3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

### **Research Paradigm**

Creswell noted, "Qualitative research is an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (2014, p. 4). Stake addresses the distinction between quantitative and qualitative, "Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists" (1995, p. 37). I will conduct a qualitative case study to evaluate the primary and secondary questions noted above.

The qualitative approach provides the opportunity to understand the story and relationship between the principal evaluation process and the development of the principal; whereas, the quantitative approach would focus on proving the null hypothesis. Additionally, "Quantitative researchers regularly treat uniqueness of cases as 'error,' outside the system of explained science. Qualitative researchers treat the uniqueness of individual cases and contexts as important to understanding" (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The

connection between the principal evaluation process and the principal is a unique connection to each individual which this study will seek to explore.

### **Research Methodology**

The qualitative approach with the constructivist perspective was chosen because this study is meant to understand the context of the world we live in by constructing meaning of a phenomenon through discussions, interactions, and views with the participants (Creswell, 2014; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2014). As J. Amos Hatch notes in *Doing Qualitative Research in Education Settings*, the constructivist view “argues that multiple realities exist that are inherently unique because they are constructed by individuals who experience the world from their own vantage points” (2002, p. 15).

Creswell continues to note the qualitative approach with a constructive perspective is based on “the researcher’s intent . . . to make sense of (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world” (2014, p. 8). Through the constructivist paradigm the researcher tends to not be distant and objective; the researcher and participants construct the reality together through mutual engagement (Hatch, 2002). The approach also allows the exploration of “human behaviors within the contexts of their natural occurrence . . . [while seeking] to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it” (Hatch, 2002).

A case study approach was chosen because “a case study is expected to catch the complexity of a single case” (Stake, 1995, p. xi). Creswell and colleagues (2007) notes, “Case study research builds an in-depth, contextual understanding of the case, relying on



multiple data sources (Yin, 2003) rather than on individual stories as in narrative

research” (p. 245). Creswell et al. (2007) continues to describe the case study approach,

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 245).

This study will develop an understanding of how principal evaluation processes continue to evolve in the K-12 educational setting to help principals grow as instructional leaders. Through this study, the researcher will explore the stories of the assistant and principal administrators and seek to understand them (Stake, 1995). As principal evaluation models continue to be developed to meet the legislation and standards, states and districts are continuing to develop sound processes to evaluate principals based on the legislation and standards. These processes must provide principals with feedback and support to help them grow so they continue to be a positive influence on the school and in the growth of the teachers in the classroom.

The purpose of this case study will be to explore the principal perceptions in two Class B school districts in Nebraska to determine if a principal evaluation process connects to the principal’s professional learning. This study will be conducted in the state of Nebraska with two K-12 school districts in Nebraska. Both schools serve approximately 2,000 students each and have between six to eight assistant or principal administrators at the K-12 level. Both schools also are located in a similar geographic location in Nebraska, and each school is experiencing a rise in the student population.

Another similarity between both schools is both districts utilize the Marzano instructional model with their assistant and principal administrators.

During the study, the researcher will seek to understand the principal evaluation and development process through the lens of the principal as he/she navigates the system during the daily routines of K-12 education. The researcher will utilize interviews, observations, and artifacts to gather data to help understand how principal's evaluation process connects to the principal's professional learning in the K-12 setting. These artifacts will provide a rich depth of understanding about the central phenomenon and will be studied until the data has reached saturation.

In the qualitative approach, "case studies are distinguished by the size of the bounded case" (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 246). This study will utilize a multiple instrumental case study in order to evaluate the principal perspective of the implementation with the initiatives to develop and implement an evaluation process which helps principals and school leaders continue to grow as an instructional leader. It will focus on implementation of a K-12 principal evaluation process and how the process is guiding assistant and principal administrators to become better instructional leaders. Research will occur with assistant and principal administrators in two Nebraska Class B school districts with 6-8 assistant or principal administrators which are implementing changes in the K-12 principal evaluation process to provide feedback and support to help principals continue to grow professionally. Both schools serve around 2,000 students and have between 6-8 assistant or principal administrators at the K-12 level. Both schools also are located in a similar geographic location in Nebraska, and each school is

experiencing a rise in the student population. Another similarity between both schools is they utilize the Marzano instructional model with their assistant and principal administrators. “In a collective or multiple-case study, the researcher again selects one issue or concern but also selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue” (Creswell et al., 2007, p. 246).

With the multiple instrumental case study, the research will not be generalized because the researcher understands that the environments and contexts will differ from location to location (Creswell et al., 2007). Although case studies provide opportunities to create generalizations, the data in this study will be studied at length until it has reached saturation (Creswell et al., 2007; Stake, 1995). As Stake notes, “Ultimately, the interpretations of the researcher are likely to be emphasized more than the interpretations of those people studied, but the qualitative case researcher tries to preserve the multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening” (1995, p. 12). The goal is to understand “how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn” (Stake, 1995, p. 1). With the presumptions and generalizations, one bias which needs to be noted is the researcher works with principals and is involved in the administrative evaluation process. This possible bias will be closely monitored throughout the entire study.

### **Context of the Study**

K-12 school districts with six to eight assistant principals and principals with a student population of 1,800 to 2,200 in Nebraska are the focus of the study. This study will focus on the local initiatives to develop and implement an evaluation process which

helps assistant and principal administrators and school leaders continue to grow as instructional leaders in their building.

Beginning in January 2011, the state of Nebraska developed a framework which was tied to the ISLLC standards for principal evaluation. The model focused on four key areas (NDE, 2012):

1. assess principal's impact on student learning and school performance;
2. measure student, staff, and community perception;
3. professional development linked to evaluation; and
4. all inclusive assessment of overall performance based on Nebraska frameworks.

In the state of Nebraska, this model was one option for districts. During this study, the focus will reside in only one of the four domains. Professional development is a large part of helping administrators move forward and become instructional leaders. This aspect is a staple to the other key areas and is key to helping leaders become more instructionally sound.

As districts begin to look at other options, other research-based frameworks are being explored such as the ISLLC Policy Standards, James Stronge's Principal Performance Standards (2013), and Robert Marzano's Principal Evaluation Framework (2012). The 2015 ISLLC Policy Standards includes ten total standards with eight professional standards with the main purpose of helping leaders to "improve student achievement and meet new, higher expectations" (Council of Chief State School Officers,

2016). These standards were created by the Council of Chief State School Officers in conjunction with the Wallace Foundation.

The standards were revised because “the world in which schools operate today is very different from the one of just a few years ago—and all signs point to more change ahead” (National Policy Board, 2015, p. 1). The National Policy Board for Educational Administration noted several conditions which have changed driving the revision of the standards. Some of these changes are focused around globalization, technology, family structures and demographics, educational politics, school funding, and higher accountability.

While these changes are providing challenges, the National Policy Board also noted, “At the same time they present rich and exciting opportunities for educational leaders to innovate and inspire staff to pursue new, creative approaches for improving schools and promoting student learning” (p. 1). With these changes and these opportunities, educational leaders needed new standards “to guide their practice in directions that will be the most productive and beneficial to students” (p. 1).

The Stronge Evaluation Framework contains indicators which “are not prescriptive; rather, the indicators serve as examples of quality performance within the given standard” (Stronge, 2012, p. 1). This framework “acknowledges the complexities of the job; thus, multiple data sources are necessary to provide for a comprehensive and authentic ‘performance portrait’ of the principal’s work” (p. 2). It also includes self-reflection which is “one of the strongest attributes for fostering professional growth and improvement” (p. 3).

The Marzano Principal Evaluation Framework is “designed to correspond to a teacher evaluation framework to maximize impact on raising student achievement” (LSI, 2016, para 1). The model “develops effective school administrators with an unwavering focus on driving student achievement” (para 3) and provides “strategies and tools to empower their teachers so leaders and teachers can focus to gather on the ultimate objective: improving student learning” (para 3).

These models help to provide multiple frameworks which highlight the move to construct evaluation processes based on standards focusing on instructional leadership. The role of the principal has changed and the frameworks for evaluation are changing as well.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Creswell defines the researcher’s role as such, “qualitative research is interpretative research; the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with participants” (2014, p. 187). This dynamic serves as one of the key purposes for electing to conduct a qualitative study. The researcher intends to go beyond the surface and truly understand the phenomena because he/she becomes a part of the process. Although this is a strong aspect of qualitative research, it also provides pitfalls for the researcher.

As a Director of Curriculum for a K-12 public school in Nebraska, the researcher understands the importance of instructional leaders in the principal role. The role of the principal has seen much needed change by focusing more on instruction rather than management. The researcher values strong leadership which helps classroom educators

utilize best practices to help all students exceed in the classroom. As noted by many researchers, principals are the cornerstone of the K-12 educational setting and do have an impact on the learning environment. Because of their strong connection, school leaders must find ways to help the principals grow as leaders. The evaluation processes, which include the district the researcher is currently working in, are outdated and need to be reformed to provide more focus on instructional leadership rather than management.

As noted by Creswell, “Qualitative researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants” (2014, p. 185). Because the researcher is the primary data collector, the researcher will be cognizant of her views about principal leadership ensuring objectivity within the study. The researcher understands her beliefs and views and will place these aside as the researcher listens and watches attentively to gather the perception of the administrator and not the perceptions of the researcher. The researcher will utilize methods during the study and through data validation to ensure her experiences do not cause her “to lean toward certain themes, to actively look for evidence to support [my] position, and to create favorable or unfavorable conclusions about the sites or participants” (Creswell, 2014, p. 188).

With the study, the researcher does not foresee any ethical issues which may arise. The researcher will apply for an exemption from the Institutional Review Board because the project is a case study which is designed to review the principal evaluation process and its connection to the principal’s professional development. The data will not be published or distributed outside of the classroom and institutional setting. The researcher has been CITI trained with the certification expiring in December of 2017.

### **Data Collection Methods and Sources**

In order to understand the perspective of the principal, many different forms of documentation will be gathered throughout the study. The main form of data will come through the interviews and observations of the principals. The interviews will be conducted by the researcher which will provide depth to the understanding of the principal perspective of how the evaluation process is connected to professional growth. Additionally, the evaluation matrix and other documents, such as professional growth plans, will be collected as well. These documents will help the researcher explore the systems in place which have aided in constructing the principals' perceptions.

Throughout the study, the researcher will try to gather the initial interview data in a natural setting so the participants are in a comfortable environment. This location will also provide the participants more familiarity which will help the researcher gather information "where participants experience the issue or problem under study" (Creswell, 2014, p. 185). Creswell also notes, "This up-close information gathered by actually talking directly to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research" (2014, p. 185). If follow-up questions need to be answered, the researcher will try to return to the site; however, email or phone calls may need to be utilized if the researcher cannot make another trip because of time or financial constraints.

Table 2 highlights the different types of data collection which will be utilized in this study and a detailed plan in order to obtain the different pieces of data.



Table 2

*Data Collection Types*

Data Collection Types	Description	Steps Taken to Acquire Data
Interviews	<p>Face-to-face, one-on-one, in-person interviews conducted with participants</p> <p>“One of the most important sources of case study evidence is the interview” (Yin, 2014, p. 110)</p>	<p>The interview protocol is developed and piloted with principals in my K-12 district.</p> <p>Participants will be contacted and permission will be received to conduct the study.</p> <p>The time and location will be established for the face-to-face interview.</p> <p>Questions will be shared ahead of the visit because of distance that may need to be traveled.</p> <p>During the interview, taping will occur with the use of the researcher’s phone or computer. The researcher will also take notes in case the technology fails to record.</p> <p>Follow up questions will be asked during the interview, but the researcher may reach out through phone or email for follow up questions.</p>
Observations	<p>Direct observations – role of researcher is known</p> <p>“Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied” (Yin, 2014, p. 114)</p>	<p>Develop an observational protocol which will be utilized during the interviews and conversations.</p> <p>During the interview, the researcher will observe the participant and note specifics observations next to the questions.</p> <p>If the observer becomes a participant, confidential information may be shared. If confidential information is given, the researcher will not share this information in the data collection.</p> <p>The researcher will also observe other interactions which occur before or after the interview.</p>
Documents	<p>Public documents will be gathered from the minutes of board meetings, committee meetings, and newspaper clippings.</p> <p>As Yin noted, “For case study research, the most important use of documents is to corroborate and augment evidence from other sources” (2014, p. 107)</p>	<p>The researcher will work with the principal and the district on gaining the materials which showcase the development of the evaluation framework and the implementation of a professional development plan which was tied to the framework.</p>

These three types of data will be a large part of the study. If other pieces of data arise as the study is occurring, the researcher will gather those materials as well. As the researcher evaluates the interview data collection, the interviews will be semi-structured and will allow for expansion with the questions and the topics. The interviews will follow the participant informed consent form found in Appendix A. After the interview, the researcher will transcribe the interviews. Because the researcher will transcribe the interviews, the researcher will listen to the recordings and begin to note trends with the data and the information.

The observations will be kept in a field journal which will house the viewpoints of the researcher as she becomes more of an active participant through the conversations than an observer. Along with the observations noted in the field journal, the documents gathered will also be found in the field journal. The analysis and notes will be written in the journal so all information can be compiled during the study.

All of the documents will be locked in a secure file cabinet in the researcher's office until the study has been completed and the dissertation has been defended. After such date, the documents and transcriptions will be shredded and the recordings will be deleted.

Eight questions will drive the study to help the researcher determine the impact of the principal evaluation on the growth of the principals. The questions found in Table 3 evaluate the relationship with the supervision, the evaluation framework, and the correlation between the supervisor and the framework.

Table 3

*Research Questions*

Question #	Question
1.	Tell me about your current position and relationship with your supervisor.
2.	What are the elements of your current evaluation process?
3.	Who conducts your evaluation? How often is the evaluation conducted?
4.	How do those elements help you, as a principal, to grow into an instructional leader?
5.	How do you perceive the role of the person who evaluates you in this process?
6.	What is your perception of the different types of feedback given during the evaluation process?
7.	After the evaluation, what is your perception of the next steps?
8.	Overall, what is your perception of the purpose of the evaluation process in your district?

**Data Analysis and Validation**

With Stake's model (1995), he emphasizes the process and creating a deeper understanding of the case study. He notes, "For instrumental case students, the issue is dominant; we start and end with issues dominant" (p. 16). Stake's model will be utilized throughout the analysis and validation of the data because the model focuses on "clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations" (p. 102).

Data analysis will be processed and analyzed by the researcher. Stake notes, "Qualitative study capitalizes on ordinary ways of making sense" (1995, p. 72). The researcher will utilize different methods in order to analyze and validate the data. "Two strategic ways that researchers reach new meanings about cases are through direct interpretation of the individual instance and through aggregation of instances until

something can be said about them as a class” (p. 72). With the qualitative approach, the data collection and analysis occurs throughout the study; whereas, the quantitative measures collect the data and then analyze the information.

During the interviews and observations in the study, the researcher will be gathering data and begin to analyze the data. Also, because of the extensive data being collected through the interviews and the observations, the data may become overwhelming. According to Creswell (2014), qualitative researchers must begin to focus in on parts of the data and disregard others. Through this process, smaller themes begin to develop. Naturalistic generalizations will be made throughout the study. “Naturalistic generalizations are conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life’s affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves” (Stake, 1995, p. 85). This study will include multiple data points to help the researcher begin to arrive at generalizations because she has been closely tied to the process.

As the researcher listens during the interviews, makes her observations, read the transcriptions, and evaluate the documents, the researcher will begin to identify key themes which are appearing. After the analysis of data by hand, the researcher will also begin to compare her initial thoughts and trends with the thoughts and trends after the coding. This will be the first step in validating the data. Through all of this data collection and analysis, a chain of evidence should begin to form which will “increase the reliability of the information in a case study” (Yin, 2014, p. 127).

The coding begins the process of seeing trends and linking thoughts and observations together. In order to analyze the data and validate the results, the researcher will utilize the framework developed by Stake in his text *The Art of Case Study Research*. Stake identifies six things to assist in the validation of naturalistic generalization (1995, p. 87). These items are identified below and will be utilized throughout the study:

1. Include accounts of matters the readers are already familiar with so they can gauge the accuracy, completeness, and bias of reports of other matters.
2. Provide adequate raw data prior to interpretation so that the readers can consider their own alternative interpretations.
3. Describe the methods of case research used in ordinary language including how the triangulation was carried out, especially the confirmation and efforts to disconfirm major assertions.
4. Make available, both directly and indirectly, information about the researcher and other sources of input.
5. Provide the reader with reactions to the accounts from data sources and other prospective readers, especially those expected to make use of the study.
6. De-emphasize the idea that validity is based on what every observer sees, on simple replication; emphasize whether or not the reported happenings could have or could not have been seen.

After the data has been collected, data must be validated. As Stake notes, “All researchers recognize the need not only for being accurate in measuring things but logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements” (1995, p. 108). Triangulation will be

the first strategy utilized to validate the finding. Multiple sources of data will be utilized “by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). The multiple sources will be found throughout the interviews, the documents, and the observations to help determine how principal evaluation promotes professional growth.

During the study, the researcher will also utilize member checking “to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings,” to give the participants and opportunity to share their opinions about the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). In compiling and analyzing the data, the researcher will give the participants the opportunity to see the trends and to ask any follow up questions which will help the researcher capture the essence of the themes in the case study.

During the study, the researcher will utilize a colleague “who reviews and asks questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). The researcher’s peer reviewer will be a superintendent who was chosen because of his interest in the principals evaluation process.

### **Reporting the Findings**

Because this is a case study approach, the researcher will utilize data displays to highlight the coding methods utilized throughout the study. The themes will be defined throughout the study and will be utilized “to present these descriptions and themes that convey multiple perspectives from participants and detailed descriptions of the setting or

individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 204). In order to validate the findings, the data must be clearly defined to show the readers the development of the themes throughout the study.

These trends will be developed through an in-depth analysis of the different principals interviewed and their perceptions of how the principal evaluation process provides support to their professional growth. The analysis will provide insight into the experiences of the principals while highlighting the themes which resonated throughout the study. Quotes and dialogue will be employed to capitalize on the themes and demonstrate findings of the study.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Summary of Findings**

The purpose of this case study was to explore the principal perceptions in two Class B schools in Nebraska evaluating how a principal appraisal process connects to the principal's professional learning in the K-12 setting. The study examined the principal evaluation process from the perspective of eight principals and assistant principals in two Class B districts. For the purposes of confidentiality, the districts will be identified as District I and District II. Both districts have a similar configuration of buildings: elementary school (K-2), intermediate school (3-5), middle school (6-8), and high school (9-12). Table 4 defines the two districts and provides data about each district.

The researcher interviewed one principal or assistant principal at each level in each district for a total of eight interviews. All eight principals were receptive to provide insight into the principal evaluation process. The interview pool included male and female principals and assistant principals with at least three years of experience in administration.

#### **The Evaluation Process**

**District I.** In District I, the principal evaluation process includes the superintendent providing feedback through a descriptive narrative to the principals two to three times a year. The comments are given while referencing the Principals Performance Framework from the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE). The Nebraska Principal's Performance Framework includes the following tenets:



Table 4

*District Demographics*

	District I	District II
Enrollment	2321	1940
Demographics	White – 91% Hispanic – 5% 2 or More Races – 1% Asian – 1% African American – 1% American Indian – 1%	White – 37% Hispanic – 58% 2 or More Races – 1% Asian – 3% African American – <1% American Indian – <1% Native Hawaiian – <1%
Free and Reduced Lunch	15.38%	61.80%
Special Education	8.78%	15.99%
Average ACT ELA	20.7	17.3
Average ACT Math	21.0	19.4
Average ACT Science	21.6	18.0
NeSA ELA	70%	44%
NeSA Math	82%	66%
NeSA Science	76%	70%

1. Vision for Learning
2. Developing Relationships
3. Continuous School Improvement
4. Instructional Leadership
5. Staff Leadership
6. Systems Management
7. Culture for Learning
8. Professional Ethics and Advocacy

The superintendent then keeps an electronic folder where the artifacts are archived to provide evidence of effective performance and/or areas needing to be addressed or improved. District I superintendent noted, “The scope of responsibilities for a principal is so large that it is challenging to encapsulate feedback that is specific and meaningful

while also being thorough. I think the most important thing is to have ongoing dialogue and consistent check-ins.”

During the communication with the superintendent, the superintendent noted the need to develop a more formal rating scale for the final summative part of the process. However, the development of a rating scale was not at his top priority because he focused more on the sustained and meaningful discussions. Through the process in District I, his goal is to provide constant feedback to support their reflection and their growth. He wants to provide sustained conversations over time to ensure he is helping each member of the team grow. The other reason why he focuses on sustained and meaningful discussions is to determine the strengths of the principal. By understanding his leadership team, he is able to acknowledge when a concern is a leadership concern or an organizational concern.

**District II.** In District II, the principal evaluation process, which can be found in Appendix C, consists of the superintendent utilizing a Board of Education approved evaluation tool. The superintendent noted that he evaluates “each administrator once each semester in the first three years, once per year in the fourth and fifth years, and at least once every three years thereafter.” On the tool, the purpose of the evaluation is defined as seeking to “bring about performance improvement; collect data for the purpose of identifying professional growth; collect information that may lead to the modification of assignment, retention, or dismissal; and recognize superior performance.” Through the purpose of the process in District II, the second purpose clearly defines the need to collect

data to help principals and assistant principals grow professionally. This purpose did not resonate during the interviews.

The evaluation process focuses on six areas which have a strong emphasis on building relationships. The first three areas focus on building strong relationships with the administrative staff; teaching staff; and parents, students, and community members. The other three areas reflect the expectations with professional and personal characteristics, supervisory practices, and administration. Looking deeper at the evaluation form as a part of the growth and development of the principal, 7/54 criteria provide feedback to help highlight the growth and development as an instructional leader for principals and assistant principals. These criteria are found in the second, fourth, and fifth domains and are identified in Table 5.

Table 5

*District II Evaluation Criteria*

Domain	Criteria
Learning Environment and Teacher Relationship	1. Promotes and articulates high expectations for teaching and student learning.
	2. Strives for continuous school improvement and the academic progress of all students.
	3. Provides motivation and resources for faculty members to engage in professional growth activities.
Professional and Personal Characteristics	4. Sets priorities in the context of improving student achievement.
	5. Engages in a planned program of professional-growth activities.
Supervisory Practices	6. Encourages staff to expand their instructional skills and supports such efforts.
	7. Encourages teaching strategies which address multiple learning styles.

When the superintendent was asked about the guiding framework for the system, he responded, “This is my second year in [District II], so I am guessing a little bit about my answer. The tool probably was set with NDE administration norms – at some point.” However, he did not think they were set to current norms. As a district, they have worked hard on incorporating the Marzano Instructional Model into the teacher evaluation process. He did note that the system would most likely change in the near future, “Since we are asking the teachers to focus on Marzano, we made the decision that the principal evaluation tool will also move to a Marzano-based system.”

### **Research Questions**

The impact of the principal evaluation process on helping principals learn was understood through the primary and secondary questions below. The primary and secondary questions were developed to provide an understanding of the methods utilized in a district to ensure strong leaders were provided feedback and guidance through their evaluation process.

**Primary research question.** What is the principals’ perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?

#### **Secondary research questions.**

1. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district’s evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?

3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

### **Themes**

Throughout the interviews, many themes developed through the discussions. The coding matrix of the interviews is found in Appendix B for District I and District II.

During the coding process, the codes revolved around the following areas of focus:

(a) feedback frequency; (b) feedback quality; (c) feedback for growth; (d) culture and climate developed through the relationship with supervisor; (e) timely feedback for professional learning; (f) specific feedback for professional learning; and (g) supervisor visibility and depth of understanding. These areas were then evaluated and combined together to develop the three main themes.

As the themes developed the researcher began to see differences appear between District I and District II. District I has a more developed evaluation process which provides guidance and support for the principal and assistant principal administrators. The principals and assistant principals felt their current evaluation process helped them reach their goals instructionally and continue to grow professionally as district leaders. They had frequent conversations with their superintendent to support their growth and development. Their perception of the evaluation process was a positive experience which helped to guide them from quarter to quarter. During the interview process, the principals were excited to discuss how the superintendent and the evaluation process was a strong part of their reflection on their current practice. They worked closely together as a team to push the district forward under the guidance of the superintendent.

In District II, the principals did not feel that the current evaluation process helped them to reach what they desired to aid in professional growth as an instructional leader. During the interviews, the District II principals shared thoughts of their current evaluation framework, but they also shared thoughts of what they desired to have in place with an effective evaluation process. This became a key component during the transcription process. The tone of the principals' voices contained more excitement as they began discussing the desired evaluation process. This observation continued to validate their responses and the themes which developed.

As the principals described the process, three of the principals seemed to be leery about the purpose of the questions and the purpose of the case study. They were focused on trying to find the right answers rather than talking about the process. During the interview with one of the three principals, the principal continued to try to search for the form which had the elements of the evaluation system so she could discuss these components with the researcher. The fourth principal focused solely on building relationships and how that was a large goal for him. Many answers from these principals were short and not descriptive.

### **Theme 1: Feedback frequency and specificity.**

#### ***District I.***

*Theme 1: The current evaluation process encourages growth and development as an instructional leader through frequent, specific feedback.* During the interviews, the first theme developed from the perceptions and thoughts of all four principal and assistant

principal administrators. The first theme focused on the following areas: frequency of feedback and quality of the feedback while focusing on the following research questions:

1. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?
3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

During the interviews in District I, all principals and assistant principals noted the frequency of the feedback to support their growth. The principal and assistant principals receive formal feedback every quarter from their supervisor. The elementary principal shared, "we get evaluated quarterly as principals." The high school assistant principal noted, "It is always ongoing feedback, and especially if we have a bigger event that we are planning for or just completed that, we will do some reflection afterward to provide feedback to one another of how things went." They described the process as a continuous improvement process for them which focused on sustained and meaningful discussions.

When talking about the frequency of the feedback, the middle school principal noted the superintendent provides feedback in "three or four brief paragraphs" highlighting his observations of how the quarter went. She continued, "we're gonna sit down and talk about it, and that will probably take 20-30 minutes. So, um, every quarter, I will expect something similar from him." The high school assistant principal confirmed the consistency of feedback and added, "We're constantly reflecting and providing

feedback to one another.” And, the elementary principal shared, “Quarterly is pretty impressive; I don’t have many people getting evaluated quarterly.”

The superintendent, who is their supervisor, is a constant presence in their buildings observing their faculty meetings or other meetings, visiting classrooms, talking with teachers and students, having lunch in the building, and evaluating how everything is operating. The intermediate principal noted, “He’s in the buildings; he sees the email correspondence that we send out to our staff. All of them [district personnel] will drop in on our staff meetings,” when talking about the presence of the superintendent. The other administrators reiterated his constant presence and accessibility. Reiterating the idea of constantly being present, the middle school principal shared, “I see my supervisor on a pretty regular basis. He comes often to lunch in our building. He, you know, frequently pops in to our faculty meetings and so it is not uncommon to see him.”

Along with the frequency of feedback, the four principals and assistant principals continued to discuss the quality of feedback and how it has helped their instructional growth as a leader. The principals and assistant principals discussed how the feedback helps them to reflect on their current practices and provide them with direction and support to continue to move forward. The middle school principal noted,

Well, I think first and foremost, what [the superintendent] provides is he is really good about affirming what you do well. . . . And so, there’s plenty of that in there, but also it helps me to reflect on those affirmations. Okay, what do I need to do to make sure that I continue to sustain these and continue that because this is something that’s making a difference and he’s noting.

The feedback is based on evidence and observation and aligned to the Nebraska Department of Education principal evaluation framework tenets. The elementary



principal shared her thoughts about the quality of the feedback, “It’s nice to have that reflection of somebody outside looking in because [the superintendent] is able to share with me things that I don’t necessarily see in myself. . . .” She continued to describe the process and how she is also involved in the process. “Um, he will ask us for, um, any kind of evidence and we have to provide answers to a question he poses.”

Similar thoughts were shared by the other principal and assistant principal administrators. The intermediate principal shared her thoughts about the quality of feedback given by the superintendent which promotes her growth because it “helps us to make sure that we are focusing in the right places – focusing on the district’s goals – also growing our teachers and ultimately impacting students.” When asked about the purpose of evaluation, the high school principal noted, “And to have it, a specific plan or idea of what we can be doing to get better, so that feedback is the purpose. I think we look at that school wide – any feedback, any evaluation – to acknowledge the great things going on and identify some areas of improvement.”

Because of the many duties given to principals and assistant principals, it is sometimes difficult to remember everything or keep the instructional leadership at the forefront. This is one important component about the quality and frequency of feedback described by the principals and assistant principals in District I. At the beginning of the school year, an assistant principal was added to the elementary and intermediate school to provide assistance to both buildings. Each principal highlighted how the superintendent helps her to refocus on the important components when sometimes she is overwhelmed by the management through the quarterly feedback in the evaluation process.

The intermediate principal shared her thoughts about how the superintendent's feedback helps guide her. She noted,

then he will also just remind us of things, with the fact that we have an assistant principal for the first time – be mindful of these things when you're working with a new assistant principal – I guess that is the piece you are looking for are areas to grow.

The elementary principal shared her thoughts about the same situation and how the feedback from the superintendent is constantly helping to remind her to be cognizant of her job responsibilities to help the assistant principal grow. She discussed how she needed the support this year because of the change in her leadership role, "You know, and I feel that mine has been very similar, gaining an AP [assistant principal] where I have never had one before." Later in the conversation, she reaffirmed the discussions they were having about the roles and responsibilities of the assistant principal. She noted, "We have kind of already started these conversations – like what do you think will help you?"

The principal and assistant principals in District I continued to note how the feedback helped them continue to grow because of the frequent, quarterly narrative and conversations which help guide their professional growth. From their perspective the evaluation process is an on-going, collaborative activity which promotes problem-solving and feedback from a superintendent who challenges each of them to improve. The elementary principal noted,

It's nice. I mean honestly, um, I feel like I go in wanting to know how I can be better, you know I think like any good teacher, it's not just I don't want to be told stuff I already know and I can kind of talk through those things that I bring usually like a sticky list of things I want to talk about too. And so we can take those 45 minutes to an hour and see if there is some stuff, you know.

She continued to talk about how she utilizes the time to problem solve areas where she wants to improve. For example, one area she noted was the amount of time she spent in the classrooms providing feedback to her teachers and being an instructional leader. The elementary principal noted:

I think where I struggle and where I tell him [superintendent] is we are really limited by my time. I am not in classrooms as much as I would like. So, it is kind of problem-solving through that time piece as an instructional leader as well as with curriculum and all of those support pieces.

Reinforcing this idea, the intermediate principal noted when asked about the role of the evaluator and the feedback he provides,

I think it is something that he takes to heart and he, um, follows up with us on those things or follows up with the whole administrative team. And tries to really help us, um, figure out how to make those things better.

This statement resonated throughout all of the interviews in District I because the principals and assistant principals clearly perceived the superintendent as a collaborative guide who has helped each of them grow through feedback and conversations.

## ***District II.***

*Theme 1: The current evaluation process encourages growth and development as an instructional leader through frequent, high-quality feedback.* In District II, the interviews with the principals at the four levels contradicted the first theme by creating a sense of looking for something better. The high school principal, who had been in the district the longest, shared some thoughts about the frequency of the feedback. When asked about how often the feedback is given, he noted, “Oh, once a year formally. We have different means along the way – he asks questions about curriculum and buildings, so I think it’s an ongoing process but nothing formal.” During another interview, the

middle school principal, who is in his first year, shared, “I’ve never seen it. I don’t know what I am being evaluated on,” as he was unsure about answering the interview questions with the researcher.

The intermediate principal noted the current evaluation system provides feedback once a year with the superintendent determining their performance on a scale and then writing some comments. She shared, “So, last year [the superintendent] met with myself once and he just scored us on a scale and then wrote some comments.” The elementary principal added that the superintendent placed the administrators on a cycle of feedback frequency similar to teachers in the classroom. She noted, “I will be evaluated three years in a row and then I will go on to a three-year cycle.” The frequency of feedback about their performance was an area where most principals wanted to see more development. Each of these principals noted how the current evaluation process does not provide them with a high frequency of feedback to help them grow as an instructional leader.

Even though the principals are not receiving a frequency of feedback which meets their expectations, the superintendent is in the buildings monitoring the district frequently. When talking with the elementary principal, she noted, “He does like come into the building but it’s more like to touch base and that might be his way kind of getting his finger in and seeing what’s happening.” However, she continued,

He, you know, he hasn’t like witnessed or observed a staff meeting. Or, he hasn’t sat in when I provided feedback to a teacher after an observation so he wouldn’t know that part, you know. Um, which I think would be very valuable.

The middle school principal shared, “Our superintendent and curriculum director come into our buildings at times. They talk about things to staff.” The other principals reiterated that the superintendent was in their buildings frequently as well.

The current evaluation process also does not provide the quality of feedback that encourages growth and development as an instructional leader. The intermediate principal in District II noted her thoughts about the quality of feedback provided by the superintendent, “some broad topics that were scored on and then he wrote some comments and then he met with us.” The elementary principal shared her thoughts about the depth of the instructional leadership comments during the evaluation process, “He did reference it like in the comments, but they’re very generic about being you know an instructional leader.”

Three of the principals interviewed in District II have received the principal position within the last three years, so they are fairly new to the district and the process. From their perception, they share a lack of understanding about the process and the tool being utilized. The middle school principal noted, “In terms of the principal [evaluation], I don’t know. I’ve never seen it. I don’t know what I am being evaluated on. . . .” as he felt uncertainty discussing the process with me. Each leader discussed this aspect providing details which created a distant and unattached feeling. Words utilized to describe the current evaluation system which created this sense were non-descriptive, generic, disjointed, scale driven, lack of direction, and not evidence-based.

The principals also shared that the current process does not encourage principals to evaluate their current instructional leadership capacity and set goals to improve.

During a conversation with the elementary principal, she noted, “It is titled the principal evaluation instrument” to reinforce her idea of the tool being solely a tool and not a process. Currently, each principal is asked to set goals for their building based on assessment or perceptual data results. However, the goals are separate from the evaluation process. The intermediate principal discussed the goals and their lack of tying back to the evaluation system. She said, “It is not part of what we - what [our superintendent] talks about, it is not tied to our evaluation.” She continued as she discussed her desired expectations later in the conversation, “I am extremely goal driven. I think we all are. So, I want to have checks and balances. I want to talk to people about when I am not.” This idea resonated with the other principals as well. The middle school principal noted,

I just don’t know how that connects because I set the goals and then they basically said okay that’s a great goal. So, I’m operating with just what my goals are and what our building objectives are. So, um, I guess at the end of it. . . . You know I think people that are good are gonna, they’re gonna run their own evaluations.

He continued by creating a comparison to the teacher evaluation process, “it’s like telling a teacher at the end of the year this is where you’re at, but you had no idea where you were . . . so that’s just kind of wrong.”

Along with the goal setting not being a part of the evaluation process, the infrequent feedback, and lack of substance, the principals continued to discuss how the feedback for growth really resonated internally rather than externally. The intermediate principal shared her internal motivation when she began talking about the action plan which she developed after her evaluation was shared with her. “I just created an action

plan. On my own, because I think what is the point of an evaluation if you don't put in an action plan?"

The principals noted that the evaluation process was something that was just done with not a lot of observation. In discussing the opportunity for frequent, high-quality feedback from the evaluation process, the elementary principal stated, "From my evaluation I am certainly aware of what skills I need to improve so I can look at the rating scales, um, but to be honest like I haven't ever found the overall worth." The elementary principal has a new assistant principal this year and commented about how she has been given little direction about how to provide leadership to her assistant principal through the evaluation process. She noted,

With the [superintendent] . . . he has not given me any instruction as to what evaluation tool to use for [my assistant principal]. So, I guess that is up to me. So, whether I decide to use this evaluation tool or feel like there should be a different one.

The intermediate principal noted, "So when I received the evaluation in December, I picked the area that needed the most improvement and I worked on that. I set my plan in place then I also picked my highest one, so I focused on a weakness and I focused on a strength." She continued to describe how she was extremely goal driven and continued to monitor her goal through Google reminders so she could move forward. The high school principal created goals as well. He noted how the rating system helped him to create goals, "But here you can actually create goals – say okay I really need to work on this. It's not to put you down to identify your weaknesses, but say we could try these things to make it better." All principals wanted to improve and wanted frequent,

high-quality feedback to help guide them to be an instructional leader; although, most of them did not feel the current system was helping to move them forward.

However, along with the current state, principals also described the desired state. This description was accompanied with a tone of excitement. Each principal understood the importance of improving the evaluation system to one which promotes growth through feedback and professional development. District II was also involved in revamping their teacher evaluation system and creating a system which provides them with a common language. The principals understood the importance of this concept and wanted similar components in their evaluation process as well. The middle school principal hoped, “that there is enough instructional elements and they’re specific enough to how our framework is specific to our teachers.”

During the interviews, principals noted many other different things they would like to see in order for an evaluation system to be effective in being a process to help them grow into instructional leaders. The intermediate principal noted a need for components in the process full of continuous conversations which are attached to goal setting and a push for improvement. The middle school principal pointed to a system which is developed with feedback that drives goals for the following year. The elementary principal also wanted written feedback to give her direction and guidance so she could refer back to it. “There is nothing written or nothing to look back at, which is sometimes a struggle. So, I would hope, or I would just ask, what are some things that I can go do?” She also discussed the need to have a mentor to help her as she transitioned



to the principal level. “Um, we don’t have like a mentoring system for administrators, um, which is huge.”

The conversations with the principals also focused on the amount of feedback through personal conversations to help principals continue to grow. All principals talked about their desire to have frequent conversations about their performance and their growth with the superintendent. The middle school principal discussed his goals and gaining feedback about the implementation of instructional strategies to meet their building goals. “They can come in and sit in staff meetings and in my office, but I would like for them to go with me to see the instruction . . . I just wish they would come and see it to give me feedback as well.”

Conversations around data, curriculum, instruction, and goals are a few of the topics noted by the principals as being a part of the foundation to the feedback provided by the superintendent. When the elementary principal talked about a common framework and process the district is going to be utilizing with their teachers, she shared,

I am excited to use it because it is not just an evaluation process. It is about helping your teachers grow and providing resources for them . . . I know there is so much that I need to learn and then have better conversations with teachers to help them reflect on what they are doing and what they could be doing.

## **Theme 2: Feedback for growth.**

### ***District I.***

*Theme 2: The current evaluation process supports growth and professional development to help principals become instructional leaders.* During the interviews, a third theme developed from the perceptions and thoughts of all principals and assistant

principals. The third theme focused on the feedback for evaluation while answering the following research questions:

1. What is the principals' perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?
2. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
3. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?
4. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

In looking at the difference between the two processes, the word 'reflect' was a common word in the discourse of District I. Reflect was used 16 times during the conversations with the principal and assistant principals in District I. In District II, the word was utilized once. The choice of words in District I defined the current evaluation process which guided them as instructional leaders to strive to grow and develop professionally. The principals and assistant principal utilized these other words, along with reflect, to define their current tool: focused, collaborative, standards-based, data driven, specific, intentional, concise, and valuable. All of these words develop an image in one's mind of a process which has become a strong part of the development of the instructional leaders in District I.

The middle school principal noted the evolution of the system during her tenure in the district.

Accountability has been kicked up a notch. And so it was not uncommon for supervisors, teachers, principals, anybody in education to not really have a good system in place for evaluation. And so therefore, I will say that this system is new . . . the state department took the leadership in saying that hey we need to evaluate our leaders and how we are doing this, and here is what things look like or these are standards in which you need to gauge things against.

She continued to discuss her thoughts with the evolution, “It has been more standards-driven. It is narrative about those particular standards and not a ranking or anything like that.” The other interviews confirmed the importance of having the evaluation process linked to standards or tenets defined by the state so they can determine areas where they need to grow.

Along with the evolution of the system, the process is also modified for novice principals versus experienced principals. The high school assistant principal noted, “early on those discussions were more frequent and more directed. And now there is more of a back and forth and there is a better understanding of where we want to go as a building, a leadership team. . . .” The other principals shared how the process helps them identify specific areas for growth and development. During the first years being the elementary principal, the elementary principal needed more guidance on finding her voice. She noted,

The only thing he has told me is that I need to talk more in admin meetings. It is kind of hard to be heard in an admin meeting. You are just kind of like what are the dynamics here and you get to know personalities in a very different way. I have found my voice. . . . He’s not currently identifying that in me, which is good.

As another principal shared her thoughts about how the evaluation process helps her grow, she stated, “My perception is that we need to take those comments or suggestions and really think through them and take action on some of those things to

challenge or some of those things to think about.” She continued that her focus is on improving as an instructional leader and the quarterly evaluation process helps her to keep focus on how she can move forward in this role. All principals and assistant principals shared this same message.

The intermediate principal provided an example to support how the feedback during the evaluation process has helped her to grow and develop as an instructional leader. She discussed how she was working with an antagonistic teacher who always saw the glass as half empty. The teacher was a concern when addressing school culture and climate. Through conversations with her superintendent during the evaluation process, he provided her with feedback to help her grow and address the situation. The principal noted, “He guided me through discussions on how to counsel teachers, confront teachers, and document their actions utilizing qualitative as well as quantitative aspects.” This process helped her grow and develop as a leader who has high expectations for all members of her team.

In District I, the evaluation process which is provided through quarterly feedback from the superintendent provides a meaningful and purposeful system to promote their growth and development. The middle school principal said:

I think the purpose is to keep us mindful of what our goals are and what our direction is and to a level of professionalism that is expected and with that the feedback needs to be provided . . . [the superintendent] quantifies the feedback and makes it something that you know is substantial.

The assistant principal at the high school noted,

We're always cognizant about always talking leadership versus management and how we want to improve. We know that management side is there and always has to be done, but we know that leadership especially instructional leadership is a bigger part of the job.

During the interviews with the principals and assistant principals in District I, the description of the evaluation process was one of hope. Each principal and assistant principal was excited to share their thoughts about the process and how it helps them to reflect on their instructional leadership, their collaboration with the administration team, and their opportunities for growth and development. The high school assistant principal shared his thoughts about how the process is intentional in its efforts to help principals grow, "But we know instructional leader is something that we are very intentional about, and he [superintendent] wants to help foster that improvement." He continued to discuss how the process was one of reciprocal growth where they pushed each other and emphasized the strengths to help each other grow.

Together all principals and assistant principals had a very positive experience to share about how the superintendent has developed a strong process aligned to the state of Nebraska tenets which focused on providing them with feedback and support to push them to grow professionally. The elementary principal helped tie it together noting, "It is about self-reflection and where do you want to become better. He is there to support that and what you see in yourself. He wants to talk about that." During the interview, she continued to share how her superintendent helped her to reflect on the behavioral issues in her building through the conversations during her evaluation process. Her supervisor had multiple conversations with her which helped guide her in a deeper understanding of

how behavior was being addressed in the K-2 primary system. These conversations were a strong part of continuing to develop her as a leader.

### ***District II.***

*Theme 2: The current evaluation process supports growth and professional development to help principals become instructional leaders.* In District II, the principals defined the evaluation process as an experience rather than a process. It was a piece of paper with a scale rating and general comments which felt like a document which was focused on meeting legal requirements rather than focusing on the growth and development of the principals. The high school principal shared, “There are five different areas rated on each area. Each area has multiple questions and things listed that you do,” when describing the process. The elementary principal shared her comments on the format of the evaluation system and process, “It’s on a 4-point rating scale: 1-Weakness; 2-Needs Improvement; 3-Meets District Standards; 4-Strength.” The evaluation process described in District II was described through these thoughts as well as the following words: contractual, bland, standard, minimal, required, one-sided, and generic.

Along with the word choice, the verb tense also pointed out how the current evaluation process does not aid in the growth and development of instructional leaders. The conversation quickly moved to the future tense as they talked about the purpose of the evaluation process in their district. The intermediate principal described the purpose by commenting,

What I think it should be is, um, connected to Marzano so I see our goals of the district here, I see our building goals, then I see all the staff, all of us – how are we all moving this way? And I think our evaluation should be based on if we are reaching our vision for accomplishing our mission statement.

The middle school principal shared,

The purpose is to get us to improve. It should be improvement as an instructional leader and improvement just as a leader in general. . . . That is the purpose of establishing domains and improving in those domains. It should be purposeful, not just something that you do.

As the principals described the current system, their comments reiterated that the evaluation process did not promote growth and development as an instructional leader. Each of these principals identified the need to revamp the current state because it clearly is not providing a growth framework focused on providing administrators with feedback for professional growth. The middle school principal shared his thoughts about his desire to have more of a partnership with the superintendent in order to guide his growth and development.

Our superintendent and curriculum director come into our buildings at times . . . we need to improve our Tier 1 instruction. . . . And we have a plan, but I would like for them to be able to see Tier 1 and Tier 2 instruction. They need to see what we are doing and how teachers are meeting the goals we set. I just wish they would come and see it to give me feedback as well.

He continued to share how he would like the superintendent to give him feedback and support in his goals and overall instructional leadership as the superintendent observes how the middle school principal has helped his staff members grow and develop.

The elementary principal talked about the current evaluation form and process, “But he [superintendent] doesn’t reference the evaluation form so I, um, I just was given this in April. I never saw it before.” She continued that she “put it in my file” when

referencing what she did with the evaluation after the conversation with her superintendent. The intermediate principal decided to take the form one step further. She noted,

So, when I received it in December, I picked the area that needed the most improvement and I worked on that. I set my plan in place and then I also picked my highest one. So, I focused on a weakness and I focused on a strength. . . . But I put the plan down of what I could do.

Again, the growth and development was provided by an internal force rather than an external driver. The principals want to improve but they shared that setting goals to promote their growth was an individual activity rather than a collaborative process. “I just created an action plan. On my own, because I think what is the point of an evaluation if you don’t put in an action plan,” shared the intermediate principal as she talked about her next steps. At the middle school, the collaboration about improvement happens through discussions between the principal and assistant principal. The middle school principal discussed how he and the assistant principal have worked together to build a stronger system based on their perception, “So we’ve, [assistant principal] and I, added in goals so we can compile a library on each of the elements so we can build our teachers.”

Many answers from these principals were short and not descriptive providing reinforcement about the generalness of the evaluation process in District II. When reinforcing the generalness of the evaluation process, the middle school principal shared, “I hate to say that I don’t have a lot of value with what this system is at the end of the year because it could be great. But, it’s like telling a teacher at the end of the year, this is where you’re at but you had no idea where you were.” Each team member wanted a



system which provided them with more direction and guidance as they moved forward.

The principals wanted a process which was collaborative in nature and helped them build their instructional leadership.

### **Theme 3: Relationships visibility, and understanding.**

#### ***District I.***

*Theme 3: The current relationship and support system provided by the supervisor promotes growth through feedback and professional development.* During the interviews, the third theme developed from the perceptions and thoughts of all four principals and assistant principals. The third theme focused on the following areas: culture and climate developed with their supervisor through relationships, visibility, and a depth of understanding while focusing on the following research questions:

1. What is the principals' perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective helping to improve your professional practice?
3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

During the interviews, the principals described their relationship with the superintendent, the person who evaluates each of these principals. This became a theme because it was discussed numerous times, plus it was a key component in the administrator's receiving and internalizing the feedback from their evaluation. The principals described the current relationship utilizing words such as collaborative,

fantastic, supportive, reflective, instructional, transformative, and dad. These words helped to validate their thoughts about the effectiveness of the current evaluation process reinforcing how their supervisor provided a growth model with feedback to help them improve professionally. The elementary principal discussed her “fantastic” relationship with the superintendent noting,

It’s very collaborative. At any time, I can pick up the phone and call for advice or guidance . . . we are very purposeful with getting to know each other personally as well as professionally. And, I feel very supported in my professional endeavors.

The supervisor has created a culture and climate which promotes growth in the district through the evaluation process.

In District I, the principals and assistant principals described the superintendent as a support system in the evaluation process which is critical to helping them move forward in their growth and development. The middle school principal discussed the importance of the process with the support of the superintendent,

I like the dialogue. I like both formats. Um, the opportunity to sit down and reflect on the written word, but also he goes through that with us. And so therefore, there is that dialogue as well. And then he solicits from us our input as well . . . he’s attentive to those conversations, and I know that the message it sends to me is that it is a meaningful conversation for him as well

The elementary principal shared these thoughts about the superintendent and his support in the evaluation process.

He’s overseeing the entire district and all of the minutiae that comes with that, and I feel completely honored that he carves time out to spend with us. . . . He really sees the need to use all of our leadership practices . . . as we are continuing to grow.

The intermediate principal noted, the relationship is “a two-way street in terms of how we work together.” She continued to say,

I think we are fortunate where we are because I know he is listening to what we are saying. The reason I know that is in the way that he responds to what we are saying. It's not that we talk about the things that we struggle with and nothing ever happens, it goes away. I think it is something that he takes to heart and he, um, follows up with us on those things or follows up with the whole administrative team. And tries to really help us, um, figure out how to make those things better.

Discussing the support of the supervisor, the high school assistant principal noted, "I mean there is a good working relationship. I feel like he respects my input and trusts me to lead situations whether it be with staff or with discipline or just anything that would come up."

Along with building a strong support system through collaboration and problem-solving, the superintendent is visible and has a clear understanding of the district. "He's in the buildings; he sees the email correspondence that we send out to our staff. [He] will drop in on our staff meetings. I feel like he is very accessible," described the intermediate principal when discussing how often the superintendent is present. The elementary principal added, "He is a person who wants to know something about everything. He can walk into any meeting, any room, and have that discussion."

The middle school principal described how the superintendent supports her through visibility and feedback while letting the principals grow. She commented, "I see the supervisor role is hiring the best person for the job, support them with what they need, and then getting the heck out of the way. And that's really the way that [the superintendent] is." The other principals and assistant principals shared similar thoughts about the accessibility and visibility of the superintendent. He knows what is occurring in their district but allows them to "do what we need to do and what we need to do that is

best for our building.” The elementary principal discussed how the superintendent has supported her while helping to guide her for future possibilities. She noted, “That he can see things in you that you don’t see in yourself and, um, you know he’s told me if you’re ready to fly, let’s fly.”

The principals and assistant principals continued to discuss how the visibility of the superintendent and his depth of understanding of their job aid in the creation of an evaluation process which promotes growth. The intermediate principal shared:

I am happy that he sees all of the things that we do. That he recognizes those and can define all of those, but I also always feel like we can be doing better - things that we might not be mindful of, but that he is mindful of to help us.

The high school assistant principal discussed his voice and how the superintendent allows him to find it.

I feel like all of our voices are well-respected and encouraged to provide our insight to solutions to problems that come up. And, so in that role, we are sitting side-by-side at those administrator teams meetings and all providing our insight and input.

Another principal noted that the superintendent provides “a good balance of both” areas to develop and areas of strength. The principals and assistant principals appreciated the knowledge and collaborative culture created to support their growth and development through professional conversations and learning. The elementary principal concluded with this thought about District I when she was making the decision to return as an administrator to the district,

And so, knowing that is what it was like here when I had the opportunity to apply, I knew what I was getting and that I would be supported. I think when you feel that way you can move through everything else together because you have a team.

## ***District II***

*Theme 3: The current relationship and support system provided by the supervisor promotes growth through feedback and professional development.* As the District II principals provided feedback about the relationship, they provided a deeper understanding of how the culture and climate developed by the relationship with the supervisor shaped their thoughts about the evaluation framework. The administrators talked about the professionalism of the superintendent and having a positive relationship with him; however, the relationship was merely professional and managerial. The high school principal shared his description of the role of the current superintendent, “The superintendent sees the budget, policies, operations, and what’s coming down from above. He kind of manages funding and gets us the things that we need.” This was echoed in the other principal interviews. The superintendent has created a culture where he is seen as a manager of operations rather than a support system to help guide the principals through their instructional growth and development. Another principal noted her concern of uncertainty with the culture being developed by the superintendent. She said, “Hopefully, he holds the vision that we are all trying to work towards. . . . He’s the leader. He’s the keeper of our school’s vision and mission.”

The discourse created a sense of professional and structured relationships, but it did not share the same level of support and guidance found in District I. The middle school principal noted,

My relationship with our superintendent is very good in terms of just cordialness, how we get along, so that is fine. Definitely, we have disagreements on different practices and different decisions being made, but I think our professional relationship is good.

The elementary principal commented, “He is a very transparent superintendent. He is literally over here weekly. He is very visible in the building.”

Along with the culture and climate, a true understanding of the principals and their goals for growth was also another component missing from District II. The principals shared their thoughts about the lack of guidance and support to help provide them with feedback and professional development through the evaluation process. The intermediate principal discussed how she ensures her success, “I just created an action plan. . . . On my own, because I think what is the point of an evaluation if you don’t put in an action plan.” She also marks her calendar to set a reminder to evaluate the action plan every month so she can keep it front and center. The superintendent is not part of developing the plan with her; however, she does share it with the superintendent during the formal evaluation.

The elementary principal noted her desires as well to improve and hopes those are viewed by the superintendent as well. “I would hope that he wants me to be a strong instructional leader because he knows the value and that’s how we are going to make a difference is through kids.” She later commented about how she should also take initiative to help improve. In regards to having her superintendent provide her with more feedback, she stated, “I should probably say, he you want to come watch me with my staff meetings. I could take some initiative as well. I know that he would say okay.”

In District II, principals create building goals and work with the superintendent and the curriculum director to move the goals forward. The building teams meet with the central office staff monthly to discuss the progress toward their goals. The elementary

principal noted that the goal meetings were about two hours each month to discuss the goals and how they have progressed. She shared, “I look more at the goal document because I know that we are going to meet over it over time and have conversations. So, that is something that I am preparing or looking at or adding to.” The principals did talk about how this monthly feedback is a great component; however, the process is not a part of the evaluation process.

The high school principal also shared his thoughts in reference to the creation of the goals, “They provide opportunities and then it is up to us to think about different things or opportunities to grow. So, it’s more on us.” The middle school principal added more about the creation of goals and the overall support and evaluation of the goals. He shared,

The supervisor should be a part of how we move forward, not just taking my word. You do want to trust but they need to be a part of the planning. So, I think the superintendent should be in buildings a lot to see what’s happening. If you’re not, you can only think what is going on.

Again, as noted in Theme 1, the principals are driving their own growth and development in District II. The internal drive to improve is what has created their culture. It is a culture where the supervisor and principals have respectful and professional relationships. During the interviews, the principals also described a system representing what they would like to see in a relationship with an administrator who helped them grow as instructional leaders. They would like to see a superintendent who focuses in helping principals grow through “improvement as an instructional leader and improvement just as a leader in general.” They desired a positive relationship with a partner who provided feedback, was visible, gathered data from multiple sources, and had

frequent meetings to discuss their progress and their goals. All of these components would be wrapped into a “purposeful” evaluation process that is more than “just something that you do.”

### **Validation**

After the data was collected, the data must be validated. As Stake notes, “All researchers recognize the need not only for being accurate in measuring things but logical in interpreting the meaning of those measurements” (1995, p. 108). Triangulation was the first strategy utilized to validate the finding. Multiple sources of data were utilized “by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes” (Creswell, 2014, p. 201). The multiple sources were found throughout the interviews, the documents, and the observations to help determine how principal evaluation promotes professional growth.

During the interviews observations were made of the willingness to discuss the research topic and the enthusiasm with which they discussed the process. In District I, principals and assistant principals were more willing to discuss the process with a shared excitement. They felt extremely supported in their growth as an instructional leader through the evaluation process and this was exemplified in their behavior. The principals and assistant principals experienced value in the evaluation process as a way to help them reflect on their current practices and begin to challenge themselves to improve.

Also, the discourse provided a more positive experience when principals and assistant principals described their district. These members utilized words multiple times to portray the support and guidance provided by the superintendent through their



evaluation process. The words used helped to reinforce the collaborative nature of the process in District I.

In District II, principals were more apprehensive to answer the questions because they felt they did not have the correct answers for which the researcher was searching. Each principal found a way to improve without having a sound process; however, this improvement happened when the principals created their own goals based on their data evaluation and reflection. The principals felt more isolated in these activities. Each of these observations helped to validate the themes developed in this case study.

Through the discourse in District II, principals described the process as a very formal event which took place once a year. Words such as formal, checklist, summative, and scale reinforced the nature of the system where principals felt they had a disjointed experience with the feedback and the evaluation process.

After the interviews, the researcher contacted the superintendents to understand the evaluation process and collect any forms which were a part of the process. During this contact, the comments from the interviews reinforced the descriptions from the superintendents and the documents which were used to support the process. In District I, the process did not include a form, but included observations, emails, and conversations to support the administrator growth. The process and feedback were aligned to the Nebraska Department of Education Principal Framework.

In District II, the process included a form with a scale rating of 1 – 4 which focused on 6 areas with 54 criteria. It was a process which incorporated a once-a-year feedback for most of the principals. The process was approved through a Board of

Education policy; however, the process was not aligned to a current evaluation framework and principal standards.

During the study, the researcher also utilized member checking “to determine the accuracy of the qualitative findings,” to give the participants an opportunity to share their opinions about the accuracy of the findings (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). In compiling and analyzing the data, the researcher gave the participants the opportunity to see the trends and to ask any follow up questions which helped to capture the essence of the themes in the case study. Because of the constraints of time, member checking was accomplished through emails and phone calls. The principals and assistant principals verified the coding chart and provided feedback that the themes were accurate.

Another validation measure being utilized in this study was peer debriefing. During the study, the researcher utilized a colleague to “review and ask questions about the qualitative study so that the account will resonate with people other than the researcher” (Creswell, 2014, p. 202). During this case study, the peer reviewer was a superintendent in the researcher’s district. He is very interested in this process because our system needs to be updated to provide more feedback and support to our principal and assistant principal administrators.

During the discussion with the peer reviewer, several topics were addressed about how districts were changing and modifying both teacher and principal evaluation processes. Throughout the conversation, it became apparent that districts had spent more time developing the teacher evaluation process compared to the principal evaluation process.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusions and Implications**

Principals are the cornerstone for the educational setting providing guidance and support for their teachers. They have a direct impact on student achievement through their daily interactions with the teaching staff, the curricular choices, and the hiring decisions (Goldhaber, 2007; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013; Stronge, 2013).

Principals who are strong, effective, responsive leaders help to inspire and enhance the abilities of their teachers and other school staff to do excellent work. Such principals also tend to retain great teachers and create opportunities for them to take on new leadership roles. In short, principals, through their actions, can be powerful multipliers of effective teaching and leadership practices in schools. And those practices can contribute much to the success of the nation's students. (Manna, 2015, p. 7)

In order to see change in buildings, districts must develop strong principals through their evaluation process. Principals must be provided frequent, specific feedback which supports growth and development. All of these components must be found within a system where the supervisor is visible and has a clear depth of understanding about the principal and assistant principal's performance.

### **Purpose of the Study**

Through this qualitative case study, the researcher sought to learn about the principal experience with the evaluation process and their professional growth in two Class B schools in Nebraska. Because job responsibilities have changed for principals over the last 10 to 20 years from a managerial role to an instructional role, principals must be provided support and guidance as they continue to lead. The principal evaluation

process is a key element in guiding districts to develop strong instructional leaders in the buildings.

The study explored how the principal evaluation process promoted professional growth opportunities from the perspective of the principal. During the interviews, the perception of principals provided an understanding that districts are not similar in practices to promote growth and development with principals and assistant principals. Therefore, the principal evaluation process needs to be clearly defined to provide frequent, specific feedback supporting principal and assistant principal growth and development. The process must be found in a system where the supervisor is visible and has a deep understanding about the principal and assistant principal's performance. This study addressed the following research questions:

**Primary research question.** What is the principals' perception of the connection between their evaluation process and their professional learning?

**Secondary research question.**

1. What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?
2. Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district's evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?
3. How is the district's process for evaluation connected to the principal's professional growth and development?

Throughout this chapter, the researcher will focus on answering the research questions, summarizing the findings, and connecting them to the literature. From this information,

the researchers will draw conclusions from the research and make implications for practice and research.

Principals are at the foundation of the K-12 educational experience because they provide feedback and support to help teachers grow instructionally in the classroom. The role of the principal has evolved through the years to move away from a focus on management to more of a focus on instructional leadership. If principals are to improve, superintendents and other district leaders must provide strong support through the principal evaluation process to help leaders grow and develop. The evaluation process needs to change to reflect a system more focused on providing sustained and meaningful discussions to promote self-awareness from multiple perspectives. Conversations between the superintendent and the principal during the evaluation process must be sustained and provide evidence from observations, artifacts, and evaluations to promote growth and development.

With the importance of principals in the K-12 setting, the evaluation framework and process must be a tool which helps districts and buildings continue to move forward. As seen during this study, variability between districts exists and there is still has much to accomplish to help provide principal and assistant principal leaders with a framework which addresses the tenets of the Nebraska Principal Framework focused on providing professional growth as part of the evaluation process. The comments from the administrators support their desire to improve in both District I and District II and to have an evaluation system providing them with feedback and support in this process. Together the themes provided answers to the research questions.

The three themes which developed through this case study were (a) feedback frequency and quality; (b) feedback for growth; and (c) relationships, visibility, and understanding. Together these themes developed a strong understanding of the perception of the principals about their evaluation process in their respective districts.

**Research Question 2: What process for evaluation is being utilized to evaluate K-12 principals in your school district?**

*Feedback frequency and specificity.* During the study, the first theme answered the second research question and resonated when principals expressed an interest to have frequent feedback supported with evidence and artifacts to provide them with insight into their job performance. Principals perceived the communication as imperative to their growth and development. In order to have a strong evaluation process for principals in the K-12 setting, the conversations must be informative and frequent. They must maintain two-way discussions throughout the entire year to continue to see growth and development.

For feedback to be frequent and specific, districts must first have a defined evaluation process which is attached to a principal performance standard framework. By defining the expectations and evaluation criteria, districts provide principals with a common language and expectations for their performance. During the study, both districts had a process which was tied to expectations and could provide them with a common language during the process. District I had more of a defined process tied to the Nebraska Principal Performance Framework. This connection created a stronger common language for principals and provided them with a model for the evaluation

process. District II has a process which is tied to set criteria not necessarily aligned to the Nebraska Principal Performance Framework.

As noted by James Stronge in *Principal Evaluation: A Framework for Principal Evaluation* (2013), there is a lack of research and development with the principal evaluation process. He describes, “Unfortunately, even though a principal’s effectiveness is recognized as a vital factor in improving student achievement, schools rarely measure, document, or use effectiveness ratings to inform decision making” (p. 6). As seen through the variability in both districts, the principal evaluation process is not necessarily in line with a strong framework to inform decision making. District I had a system which was aligned to the Nebraska Framework and provided the principals and assistant principals with guidance through feedback. At this point, District I did not have an effective rating system which was noted by the superintendent.

In District II, the principals noted a rating system which was not necessarily aligned to a framework and provided them with little guidance in their growth and development. The principals shared thoughts about their lack of feedback with the evaluation process and their lack of understanding about the system. As seen in research, Stronge (2013) continues to comment on the flaws in the current principal evaluation process. He notes these flaws

include an absence of meaningful and timely feedback to most principals; a lack of consequences of evaluation; an absence of clear communication of criteria and standard protocols; a failure to enhance principal motivation and improve performance; and nonalignment of evaluation instruments with professional standards. . . . (p. 7)

Three of these flaws were seen in theme one through the discussions with the principals.

Principals in District II did not have an evaluation process tied to a professional framework to help guide their development and their focus. The district evaluation process also has not been communicated clearly to novice principals in the district which created uncertainty throughout the conversations. And, the principals shared thoughts about their feedback being infrequent when the process called for a yearly summative evaluation rather than frequent formative evaluations.

Another study being commissioned by the Wallace Foundation is a study by Leslie Anderson and Brenda Turnbull (2016) about building a stronger principalship. This is the fourth report from an evaluation of the Principal Pipeline Initiative. This particular report “provides insights into the strategies and capacities that districts developed to evaluate and support their school leaders” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016, p. Preface). Through this process of working closely with six districts in their implementation of creating systems and processes which support principal and assistant principal leaders, the study arrived at many conclusions. After joining the Principal Pipeline Initiative, the six districts began to change their practices and their processes. “In revising their principal evaluation systems, districts put the main emphasis on using evaluation as a tool to help principals improve” (2016, p. ii).

One of the key areas focused on through the Principal Pipeline Initiative study is the expectations of district leaders to provide formal feedback. Supervisors described the process of providing the feedback “as an ongoing and informal basis in addition to the required conferencing” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016, p. 29). One key point discussed in



the study was “the district leaders’ desire to establish a continuous cycle of principal observation, support, and feedback” (p. 29).

From the perspective of the principals interviewed during this case study, this was one of their key desires. They wanted feedback which provided a continuous channel of discussions about their performance. Principals desired a strong collaboration with their superintendent so they could share goals, monitor the progress of the goals, determine the effectiveness of the strategies utilized to meet the goals, and evaluate the overall attainment of the goals. In order for principals to grow, the feedback needs to be constant and specific throughout the evaluation process.

**Research Question 3: Do you perceive the feedback you receive from your district’s evaluation process to be effective in helping to improve your professional practice?**

*Feedback for growth.* During the study, the second theme answered the third research question and resonated when principals talked about how the evaluation process helped them grow as instructional leaders. Ultimately, all principals and assistant principals wanted a process which provided feedback and opportunities for growth. All of these building leaders stated that the purpose of the evaluation process was to promote growth and development so they could help their school improve.

As Stronge notes, “The purpose of a quality principal evaluation system is to support the principal’s growth and development while simultaneously holding him or her accountable for student success” (2013, p. 8). The principals shared a desire to have a system which supported their growth and development as instructional leaders. In District I, principals and assistant principals shared scenarios where they received

guidance and support through the evaluation process to help them grow. They discussed conversations with their superintendents where they reflected on their current practices and determined how they could move forward. For example, the elementary and intermediate principals both described how conversations about personnel, especially the addition of an assistant principal, have helped them be more mindful of their leadership role in building their staff.

The leaders in District I felt their system was “focused on growth-based, evidence-supported, results-drive evaluation systems that identify, support, and help sustain effective principals” (Stronge, 2013, p. 15). The quarterly conversations with the superintendent provided them with feedback about their current practices because evidence was gathered and shared with each of them. During these conversations, each principal and assistant principal was able to reflect on their current practice and then begin to determine how to move forward. The conversations were intentional and purposeful including a focus on strengths and areas of growth. The principals felt these conversations helped them grow as an instructional leader because there was evidence and feedback about their current performance.

In District II, the leaders felt the system lacked rigor to move them forward and help them grow. Principals correlated their growth to their own intrinsic motivation to grow and develop as strong leaders. Each principal wanted to continue to grow and develop as a leader. Therefore, they created their own goals and then found ways to monitor their progress.

In *Leading in a Culture of Change*, Micheal Fullan writes, “Leaders are not born, they are nurtured” (2004, p. 196). Effective principal evaluation processes can help nurture and grow leaders in districts. In District II, every principal wanted to continue to grow and develop as an instructional leader. However, from their perception, the current evaluation process did not help develop them as leaders. Through their conversations and actions, they felt removed from the process because it was something that happened once a year. From their perspective, it was an antiquated system providing them with a number which was not connected to the current Nebraska Principal Performance standards.

In the Principal Pipeline Initiative study commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, districts redesigned and reshaped their principal evaluation to provide “evaluation rubrics [that] would be aligned with the same standards of principal professional practice that drove preparation and hiring, so that aspiring principals, novices, and their supervisors would receive consistent messages about what the district expected” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016, p. 9). One of the takeaways from the redesign is that principals shared that “evaluation often unfolded as . . . ‘an all-the-time conversation’ with a supervisor” (2016, p. 9). These conversations created a process which drove principal growth and development. Additionally, the process also gave principals standards to focus and guide their practice throughout the year.

In both districts, principals and assistant principals wanted a clear process which guided them to a deeper understanding of how they could improve and grow. They wanted to be the instructional leader and support for their teachers as they moved

throughout the school year. Principals in the Principal Pipeline Initiative study noted how, “the use of standards in principal evaluation systems played an important part in bringing to light issues of clarity or completeness in the standards” (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016, p. 15). The principals in both district shared the same perspective. They wanted to have a framework that provided them with specific standards related to their performance and then shaped their growth throughout the year.

**Research Question 4: How is the district’s process for evaluation connected to the principal’s professional growth and development?**

**Theme 3: Relationships, visibility, and understanding.** During the study, the third theme was prevalent throughout the entire study and resonates with the overall research question and research question number 4. In order to provide support for principals and assistant principals, one variable was having a strong relationship with the supervisor. Principals felt more comfortable receiving and asking for feedback with supervisors whom they knew and had built a strong working bond. In District I, principals and assistant principals felt a strong connection to their superintendent because he listened attentively, sought and provided feedback, and problem solved with the building level administrators. In District II, the superintendent was in his second year and the bond was not as strong.

The other components which surfaced with the relationships were having a superintendent who was visible and had a deep understanding of the principal performance. In order to provide strong feedback to help principal and assistant principals grow as instructional leaders, supervisors must be able to observe multiple

areas of performance and offer explicit feedback to help in their growth. In District I, principals and assistant principals perceive their feedback as being specific and tied to their everyday performance. They felt their superintendent has a strong presence in the building operations and was able to witness their performance. In District II, the principals perceive that their internal drive would be needed to invite their supervisor into their building to monitor their performance. The superintendent was present in the buildings; however, the principals felt that he was not necessarily observing their daily activities.

As noted in the research, the connection between the principal's performance and their evaluation process is not connected. Stronge notes, "that documenting and improving the quality and effectiveness of a principal's leadership should be at the center of the performance evaluation" (2013, p. 3). In order to document the quality and effectiveness, supervisors need to be present in the buildings and in the daily activities to provide feedback on the principals and assistant principals' performance. Dr. Jennifer Lynn Bethman also observed this theme in her dissertation, *The Principal Evaluation Process: Principal's Learning as a Result of the Evaluation Process* (2015). She noted, "Collaboration, trust, and support all result from the principal evaluators spending a significant amount of time with the principal in his or her building" (p. 115).

In the Principal Pipeline Initiative commissioned by the Wallace Foundation, the visibility of supervisors was a key piece noted in a strong evaluation processes. In order to collect evidence about principals, the supervisors had to be present; it was noted that "supervisors in all districts spent considerable time in schools" (Anderson & Turnbull,

2016, p. 25). The supervisors spent time collecting evidence through “discussions with principals, teachers, and other school staff; observations of principal performance, including principal interactions with school staff; and reviews of artifacts, including plans for school improvement and teacher professional development” (2016, p. 25). These were key artifacts to help in the principal and assistant principal evaluation process.

The supervisors in the Principal Pipeline Initiative noted,

We have a pretty robust framework for our principals and if we’re not using that as a planning tool, a coaching tool, a development tool, support, a way to model, etc., etc., a way to create common language in our building. If we’re not doing all that then we’re missing the broader purpose of why this work is so valuable. (Anderson & Turnbull, 2016, p. 29)

Principals and assistant principals across the nation want to improve and grow in their practice. This is why it is vital to provide specific feedback based on performance to help principals grow. Principals and assistant principals need direction to continue moving forward. This direction is a piece which must be provided by the superintendent or supervisor.

## **Conclusions**

As noted in the work of James Stronge in *Principal Evaluation: A Framework for Principal Evaluation*, “One comprehensive study of principal leadership evaluation practices in the United States indicated that although states and districts focus on a variety of performance areas (such as management, external environments, or personal traits) when evaluating their principals, they have very limited coverage of leadership behaviors that ensure rigorous curriculum and quality instruction” (2013, pp. 6-7). Along with the lack of tools to evaluate principals, “an even greater concern is that many

principals and assistant principals are never formally evaluated in any meaningful way” (NASSP, 2016, p. 2). These statements are clear indicators of where some school districts still reside.

The themes which resonated during the study also link to the studies in the dissertations of Dr. Jennifer Lynn Bethman (2015) and Dr. Melissa J. Poloncic’s (2016) research. Bethman’s (2015) study noted, “District leaders have a moral responsibility to evaluate principals fairly and provide them with ongoing professional development because of the impact principals can make in a school.” She continued,

The principal evaluator has to have the time to develop an understanding of the principal’s work in the principal’s school building. The more the principal evaluator understands about the specifics of the work of the principal . . . , the more support, guidance, professional development, and evidence-based feedback the principal evaluator can provide. (p. 115)

If districts are going to see change, district leadership must provide ongoing, sustained feedback to principals and assistant principals to help them grow and develop as instructional leaders.

Poloncic noted in her dissertation, *Principals Matter: Perceptions of Principals on School Leadership*, “Principals all identified personal pursuits they had identified for themselves to develop. Their needs centered around two main themes, how to develop as an instructional leader and how to communicate to influence others” (2016, p. 60). These themes resonated in this case study as well. All principals wanted to improve so they could have a stronger impact on the educational setting and student achievement.

With the impact administration has on the educational setting, the evaluation system needs to help determine the effectiveness of principals in the K-12 setting.

“Ideally, a performance evaluation system for principals (or for any other educator) will affect the quality of teaching and learning and support ongoing school improvement” (Stronge, 2013, p. 3). As states continue to structure frameworks for principal evaluation, states must develop sound evaluation models based on teaching and learning standards and professional development models which become a part of the evaluation process to help principals continue to grow. They must provide a process including key factors associated with growth: frequent, timely feedback which is rooted in observations, evidence, and artifacts. Each of these components must be provided in a system where the supervisor creates a collaborative environment building positive relationships with each building leader.

**Well-defined evaluation process.** In order for districts to provide a strong principal and assistant principal evaluation process, districts must have a well-defined evaluation process linked to principal performance standards. Principals must have an instructional guide which provides them with a road map to improvement. By linking to performance standards, principals are given a document to evaluate and reflect on as they move throughout the year.

For the most part, principal evaluation has been focused on how well a principal has managed his or her building which does not impact student achievement. The principal evaluation should be focused on how the principal is leading instructionally and helping ensure effective instructional practices are occurring in the classroom.

Standards in principal frameworks provide a common language for administrators and give them a guiding framework to help them improve. Stronge notes in his text



*Principal Evaluation*, “Performance standards define the criteria expected when principals perform their major duties. . . . They provide a balance between structure and flexibility and define common purposes and expectations, thereby guiding effective leadership” (2013, p. 67).

The framework must be the foundation of the principal evaluation process because it provides district leaders with a guide to provide high-quality, frequent feedback promoting growth in all principal and assistant principal administrators. As Stronge (2013) continues, he notes that the framework must have performance indicators. “Performance indicators provide examples of observable, tangible behaviors that indicate the degree to which principals are meeting each standard” (p. 67). The standards provide a clear indicator to help guide district leaders in providing high-quality feedback to principal and assistant principals about their performance expectations. Additionally, they provide specific targets to assist principal and assistant principals in their instructional growth and development as leaders.

**Specific and frequent feedback.** Principals must be provided with high-quality and frequent feedback to support growth and development. If principals are to move forward, they must receive feedback more than once a year and be from multiple data points. Feedback must be a constant and must be meaningful to the performance of the administrator. It must be ongoing, tied to the performance standards, and meaningful.

Stronge notes, “Multiple data sources are needed because no single source can adequately capture the complexities of school leaders’ work” (2013, p. 73). Stronge continues, “Further, documentation of a principal’s performance should be a joint effort

between the evaluator and the principal, allowing for both to provide evidence of the principal meeting each performance standard” (p. 84). District leaders must be able to synthesize the many different pieces of the principal and assistant principal job through the feedback provided. As described during the research, principals and assistant principals wanted feedback on all aspects of their job. They wanted to have discussions with high-quality and frequent feedback about how to improve based on their performance.

Feedback must continue to be ongoing and reflective in order for principals and assistant principals to improve. It must be aligned to clear standards to help move principals more into the role of instructional leaders rather than building managers. In his conclusions, Stronge shares his thoughts on frequent feedback, “Because the goal of any evaluation is either to ensure that successful job performance continues or to improve less successful performance, effective communication between the evaluator and principal is essential” (2013, p. 95).

**Instructional leaders.** District leaders must be strong instructional leaders who promote self-reflection and growth through a principal evaluation process. In order to create change in a district, district leaders must understand the role of the principal and support their growth and development. Along with changing the role of the principal, the role of the district leader must evolve as well. District leaders must have an understanding of the budget and management principles of the district as well as having a strong understanding of how to guide principal and assistant principal leaders instructionally.

As novice leaders begin in districts, they must be guided through the first year of their transition. Most leaders are connected to a mentor leader; however, leaders must guide each other to become more of a district instructional leader. If districts have a strong framework in place, district leaders are provided with clear standards on which to focus their feedback. Providing support and guidance to principals and assistant principals is critical to the success of the buildings and teachers.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Limitations and Further Research**

During the study, one limitation was the study focused on one aspect of the Nebraska Principal Framework: professional development for growth. A comprehensive evaluation of all four aspects could occur.

### **Implications for Practice and Research**

“Principal evaluation matters because principals matter. The research is clear that principals contribute substantially to student success. . . .” (Stronge, 2013, p. 105). In order to move student achievement forward, districts must ensure they are providing a strong system to guide and support principal and assistant principal administrators. As a leader who helps in the evaluation of principals, the researcher has learned much from this study. This study has allowed the researcher to evaluate and compare district evaluation processes. It has given the researcher a deeper insight into best-practices for principal and assistant principal evaluation.

Currently, the evaluation process in the researcher’s district provides generic comments primarily focused on managing the individuals in a given district. In order to improve the evaluation process, the district needs to articulate the evaluation tool to include a process aligned to all of the evaluation standards. Further research could include a review of the district’s alignment of the principal evaluation process to NDE Framework

**Implications for District Leaders**

“If we attempt to reform education without focusing on principalship quality in the school, the effort is unlikely to succeed” (Stronge, 2013, p. 105). Because legislation continues to evolve keeping student achievement at the forefront, district leaders must be current in practices to provide strong leadership to the building principals and assistant principals. District leaders must focus on implementing a strong evaluation process linked to the professional growth and development of principal and assistant principal administrators.

In order to change student achievement, districts must create and utilize a high-quality principal evaluation process. The leadership of the district must develop systems and processes to guide principal and assistant principal administrators through a professional growth process. The evaluation process in place must be tied to principal standards and performance indicators. Districts must provide specific, frequent feedback for growth including multiple pieces of data throughout the year.

**Future Research**

Future research could focus on multiple areas of professional growth and thereby create a deeper understanding of the principal evaluation process. First, research could be conducted to understand the supervisor perspective of the evaluation process and then a comparison could be created between the supervisor and principal perspective. During this case study, the researcher gained a brief understanding of the perspective of the superintendent in each district through an email conversation. Through a more in-depth

student of the superintendent perspective, another dimension could be uncovered related to the supervisor and supervisee relationship throughout the process.

Additionally, a richer study could be developed if the study compared and contrasted multiple districts across the state to evaluate the professional growth opportunities among the evaluation processes. It would allow the researcher to evaluate the processes across the state gaining a glimpse of best practices and processes utilized in other districts. The researcher could also note which frameworks are utilized and which ones have the largest impact on principal performance and growth. Through this recommendation, district leaders might begin to develop a stronger toolbox highlighting key practices in principal and assistant principal evaluation.

Another recommendation for a study would be to evaluate the link between the principal evaluation process and the growth in student achievement. Principal and assistant principal administrators are the leaders in their building. The research shows leadership does have a direct impact on student achievement. A study could be conducted to see which processes best promote student achievement and teacher growth.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Participant Informed Consent**



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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES  
Department of Educational Education

## **PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT**

### **Project Title**

A Case Study: The Principal Evaluation Process: Connecting Principals' Evaluation to the Growth and Development Process

### **Project Purpose**

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted by Jackie Nielsen, Director of Curriculum and Instruction for Beatrice Public Schools.

Participation is completely voluntary, and you may refuse to answer any question. The purpose of this case study will be to explore the principal perceptions of how the principal evaluation process provides feedback to help principals become instructional leaders in the K-12 setting.

### **Procedures**

If you choose to participate, you will be interviewed by Jackie and asked to respond specific questions. The interviews will take place at an agreed upon location and will take between 45 to 60 minutes to complete. Notes will be taken and the interview will be recorded and transcribed. The following questions will be utilized during the interview. Additional questions will be asked for clarification. Questions consist of the following:

- Question 1: Tell me about your current position and relationship with your supervisor.
- Question 2: What are the elements of your current evaluation system?
- Question 3: Who conducts your evaluation? How often is the evaluation conducted?
- Question 4: How do those elements help you, as a principal, to grow into an instructional leader?
- Question 5: How do you perceive the role of the person who evaluates you in this process?

Question 6: What is your perception of the different types of feedback given during your evaluation?

Question 7: After the evaluation, what is your perception of the next steps?

Question 8: Overall, what is your perception of the purpose of the evaluation framework in your district?

**Risks:**

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study.

**Benefits**

There are no foreseen direct benefits to you regarding participation in this study beyond the general knowledge that you are assisting in furthering this research topic.

**Compensation**

There is no compensation associated with participation in this study.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:**

It is my goal and responsibility to use the information that you have shared responsibly. In order to keep everything confidential, the survey responses and transcription materials in a locked file cabinet in their office with the intention of disposing of the material 6 months to one year following the completion of your doctoral degree.

**Contact Information**

If you have any questions about this study, contact me by phone or email. Jackie Nielsen, Beatrice Public Schools, (402) 223-1520 or Dr. Kent Mann, University of Nebraska Lincoln, (402) 472-3459.

Sometimes study participants have questions or concerns about their rights. In that case, you should call the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at (402) 472-6965.

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln wants to know about your research experience. This 14 question, multiple-choice survey is anonymous. This survey should be completed after your participation in this research. Please complete this optional online survey at: <http://bit.ly/UNLresearchfeedback>.

## Consent

We would like to give you the opportunity to provide us with additional feedback on how you prefer to have your data handled. Please check one of the following statements to indicate your preference:

- \_\_\_ You may share the information just as I provided it. No details need to be changed and you may use my real name when using my data in publications or presentations.
- \_\_\_ You may share the information just as I provided it; however, please do not use my real name. I realize that others might identify me based on the data, even though my name will not be used.
- \_\_\_ You may share the information I provided; however, please do not use my real name and please change details that might make me identifiable to others. In particular, it is my wish that the following specific pieces of my data not be shared without first altering the data so as to make me unidentifiable (describe this data in the space below): \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_ You may contact me if you have any questions about sharing my data with others. The best way to reach me is (provide phone number or email): \_\_\_\_\_

I acknowledge that I am at least 19 years of age, the researcher has explained my rights, the requirements of this study and the potential risks involved in my participation. You are free to decide not to participate in this study. You can also withdraw at any time without harming your relationship with the researchers or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. By signing this form and participating in the interview, you will be providing your consent to participate. You will be given a copy of this document for your records.

## Consent of Participant

Signature of Research Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number and Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

## **Appendix B**

### **Dissertation Permission Email Request**



**Dissertation: The Principal Evaluation Process: Connecting Principals Evaluation to the Growth and Development Process: A Case Study**

Jackie Nielsen  
Dr. Kent Mann

**Email Recruitment Message sent to District Superintendents**

Good morning Superintendent's Name,

Attached please find a proposal request to conduct dissertation research with four of your administrators. The purpose of my study is to develop an understanding of how a principal evaluation process continues to evolve in the K-12 educational setting to help principals grow as instructional leaders. I am conducting a case study and would like to interview one principal at each of the four building levels: primary, intermediate, middle, and high school. The interviews will take less than 1 hour and be set up with each administrator.

I am excited about how my study can help guide and shape the principal evaluation process. I would be excited to have Your Public Schools be a part of my research. Please let me know if you would agree to authorize this study.

If you have any questions, you can contact me by email or by phone at [\(402\) 223-1520](tel:402-223-1520).

Have a wonderful day,  
Jackie

**Email Recruitment Message sent to District Administrators**

Greetings Administrator's Name,

I am conducting a case study to complete the requirements of my dissertation. The main purpose of my study is to develop an understanding of how the principal evaluation process continues to evolve in the K-12 educational setting to help principals grow as instructional leaders.

I am excited about how my study can help guide and shape the principal evaluation process. I am trying to interview one principal or assistant principal at the four levels in the K-12 setting: primary, intermediate, middle, and high. I have received permission from [superintendent] to conduct the research in your district.

I would like to interview you toward the end of the month if you would agree. The interviews will take less than 1 hour and will take place in your office or another location of your choosing. Also, the questions will be provided ahead of time and the information will be handled in a responsible manner.

Please let me know if this will work in your schedule and if you would be willing to participate in my study.

Have a wonderful one,  
Jackie

## **Appendix C**

### **District I Principal Evaluation Form and Process**

### **District I Evaluation Form and Process**

During the study, District I did not have a formal instrument available or on record.

## **Appendix D**

### **District II Principal Evaluation Form and Process**

## District II Public Schools Principal Evaluation Instrument

**Administrator:**

**Date:**

Each employee is capable of improving his or her performance. Accordingly, the Board directs the superintendent or principal to evaluate the job performance of the Assistant Principal for the following purposes:

- To bring about performance improvement.
- To collect data for the purpose of identifying professional growth.
- To collect information that may lead to the modification of assignment, retention or dismissal.
- To recognize superior performance.

The rating scale for each of the criteria is as follows:

- 1 = Significant weakness
- 2 = Needs improvement
- 3 = Meets district standard
- 4 = Strength beyond district standard

### Relationships with Superintendent and Administrative Staff

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Accepts and carries out the administrative policies of the school system.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Submits requested information accurately, professionally and in a timely manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Keeps the superintendent informed in building matters and matters which may involve the Board of Education.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Possess a positive attitude toward constructive criticism.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Understands and uses the proper channels for referrals of complaints, misunderstandings, and compliments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Demonstrates involvement and interest in the district's over-all educational objectives.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Demonstrates effective and professional relationships among administrative colleagues.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Shows initiative required of a person in a leadership position.

### **Learning Environment and Teacher Relationship**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Promotes and articulates high expectations for teaching and student learning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Strives for continuous school improvement and the academic progress of all students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Is readily accessible to staff.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Shows appreciation for teachers' efforts and accomplishments.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Demonstrates impartiality and fairness in dealing with all school personnel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Actively supports the staff in their relationships with parents, students, and the community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Provides effective orientation for new and substitute employees.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Provides motivation and resources for faculty members to engage in professional growth activities.

### **Relationships with Youth, Parents and Community**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Demonstrates alertness to the interests, as well as the growth and development, of children and young people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Cultivates the acquaintance of as many individual students as possible.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Communicates the school policies concerning appropriate behavior and expectations to all students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Demonstrates a fair, firm, and consistent approach regarding student incidents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Engages the community to create shared responsibility for student and school success.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Creates symbols, ceremonies and activities that support the vision and mission of the district.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Initiates contacts with parents to communicate both student success and concerns.

### **Professional and Personal Characteristics**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Sets priorities in the context of improving student achievement.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Presents self in a neat and well-groomed appearance.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Demonstrates ethical and trustworthy behavior.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Achieves resolution to problems in a respectful and empathetic manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Maintains an interest in the welfare of staff and students.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Maintains a friendly, cooperative attitude toward people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Displays dependability, tactfulness, and punctuality.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Maintains contact with current research and practice in educational fields.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Communicates effectively when writing or speaking.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Engages in a planned program of professional-growth activities.

### **Supervisory Practices**

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Considers supervision as an aide to the improvement of instruction rather than as a means of a critical inspection.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Adequately supervises classroom instruction and completes documentation in a timely manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Participates in/conducts an interview process in a professional and effective manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Demonstrates knowledge of academic standards.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Encourages staff to expand their instructional skills and supports such efforts.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Encourages teaching strategies which address multiple learning styles.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Actively promotes the use of quality assessments and review of data.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Actively stresses the inclusion of positive citizenship traits, in all phases of the instructional program.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Familiar with effective instructional strategies and communicates such knowledge with teachers.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Demonstrates the ability to recognize exceptional skills as well as to provide constructive criticism and strategies for improvement.

### Administration

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Delegates appropriately and accepts full responsibility for delegated authority.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Shows promptness and accuracy in reporting to the central administration.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Enforces Board policies and regulations in spirit as well as fact.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Aides in the organization of the total school program to promote the safety and welfare of all students and personnel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Organizes the total school program to promote the safety and welfare of all students and personnel.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Develops a well-organized office routine for service to teachers, students, and parents.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Manages fiscal resources of the school in a responsible manner.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Works continuously to develop a spirit de corps on the part of students, faculty, and patrons.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Works to make the school office and school building places where everyone feels welcome and comfortable.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Understands and promotes the district's school improvement plan.

### Comments:

### Employee Statement/Signature

My signature below indicates that I have read the above evaluation. A signature does not indicate that I agree or disagree with this evaluation. I understand that I have seven (7) days from the date below to file a response to this evaluation which will be so attached.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Principal

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## **Appendix E**

### **District I Codes**

### District I Codes

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences?	Current evaluation process stimulating growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Constant Conversations &amp; Reflection</li> <li>Quarterly</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reflective</li> <li>Supportive</li> <li>Evidence Driven</li> <li>Directional</li> <li>Attached</li> <li>In-depth Narrative</li> <li>Based on observations</li> <li>Based on visits in the building</li> <li>Based on feedback from others</li> <li>Based on data</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback for Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attached to standards – NDE &amp; Marzano Instructional Model</li> <li>Collaborative – Both provide data pieces for support</li> <li>Numerous observations</li> <li>Growth is together – Reciprocal growth</li> <li>Attached to goal setting</li> <li>Push for improvement</li> <li>Drives goals for the next year</li> <li>Improvement</li> <li>Enhancements of instructional leadership</li> </ul>

Appendix D continues

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences? (cont'd)	Relationship and Support System of supervisor to promote growth through feedback and professional development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture and Climate developed through Relationship with Supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Fantastic</li> <li>• Supported</li> <li>• Reflective</li> <li>• Instructional</li> <li>• Conversational</li> <li>• Dad</li> <li>• Knowledgeable</li> <li>• Transformative</li> <li>• Challenging</li> <li>• Open</li> <li>• Positive relationship</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Support system</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility and Depth of Understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• True understanding of performance</li> <li>• Very visible</li> <li>• Constant Guidance and Support (24/7)</li> <li>• Awareness – Does not like surprises</li> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Frequent meetings</li> <li>• Information based on multiple sources</li> <li>• Providing constant feedback</li> </ul>

Appendix D continues

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences? (cont'd)	Evaluation tool supports growth and professional development to help principals become instructional leaders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback for Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focused</li> <li>Collaborative</li> <li>Strengths</li> <li>Areas of growth</li> <li>Continuous discussions</li> <li>Driven by standards – NDE</li> <li>Specific</li> <li>Data Driven</li> <li>Becomes a part of the larger discussion</li> <li>Problem solving</li> <li>Intentional</li> <li>Valuable</li> <li>Concise Narrative</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timely Feedback for Professional Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Frequent feedback</li> <li>Observation through multiple avenues</li> <li>Multiple Feedback opportunities</li> <li>Quarterly feedback opportunities for reflection and growth</li> <li>Continuous</li> <li>Punctual</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality Feedback for Professional Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Opportunistic</li> <li>Focused on growth</li> <li>Driven by goals - NDE</li> <li>High expectations</li> <li>Reflective</li> <li>Research-based</li> <li>Proven</li> <li>Conversation driven</li> <li>Collaborative</li> </ul>

## **Appendix F**

### **District II Codes**

### District II Codes

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences?	Current evaluation process inhibiting growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Periodical Conversations</li> <li>Once a year feedback</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Non-descriptive</li> <li>Little evidence</li> <li>Lack of direction</li> <li>Distant</li> <li>Scale driven</li> <li>Lack of understanding – New administrators have not seen the tool utilized</li> <li>Generic</li> <li>Disjointed</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback for Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not attached to evaluation tool – Goals distant of the evaluation tool</li> <li>Based on a report given by principal</li> <li>Not a lot of observation</li> <li>Growth is on your own – Create own plans after the initial conversations</li> <li>Something that is just done</li> </ul>

Appendix E continues

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences? (cont'd)	<b><i>Desired</i></b> reality of an evaluation process which promotes growth through feedback and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Frequency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continuous conversations</li> <li>Constant Feedback</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback Quality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Based on observations</li> <li>Based on visits in the building</li> <li>Based on feedback from others</li> <li>Based on data</li> <li>Based on a system which ties everything together</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Feedback for Growth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attached to goal setting</li> <li>Push for improvement</li> <li>Drives goals for the next year</li> <li>Tied to vision, mission, building goals, individual goals</li> <li>Needs to be tied to Marzano Instructional Model</li> <li>Improvement</li> <li>Enhancements of instructional leadership</li> <li>Collaborative</li> <li>Purposeful</li> </ul>
	Current Relationship and Support System of supervisor to inhibit growth through feedback and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Culture and Climate developed through Relationship with Supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Positive Relationship</li> <li>Affirmation</li> <li>Lack of in-depth professional relationship</li> <li>Respectful</li> <li>Manager and Operations</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Visibility and Depth of Understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bleating glimpses of performance</li> <li>Lack of instructional visibility</li> <li>Lack of instructional guidance</li> <li>Lack of instructional awareness</li> </ul>

Appendix E continues

Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences? (cont'd)	<i>Desired</i> relationship of supervisor to promote growth through feedback and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture and Climate developed through Relationship with Supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive relationship</li> <li>• Partnership</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> <li>• Goal setting</li> <li>• Focused on improvement</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility and Depth of Understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visibility</li> <li>• Frequent meetings</li> <li>• Information based on multiple sources</li> <li>• Providing more feedback</li> <li>• Providing guidance through constant evaluations and walk throughs</li> <li>• Identification of areas of strength and growth</li> <li>• Connecting the dots</li> </ul>
	Evaluation process inhibits growth and professional development to help principals become instructional leaders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feedback for Evaluation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited amount of feedback</li> <li>• Legal</li> <li>• Contractual</li> <li>• Focused on criteria</li> <li>• Bland</li> <li>• Standard</li> <li>• Minimal</li> <li>• Repetitive</li> <li>• Required</li> <li>• One-sided</li> <li>• Form</li> <li>• Generic</li> </ul>

Appendix E continues



Central Phenomenon	Themes	Codes	Sub-Codes
How do the principals perceive the connection between the principals' evaluation framework and the principals' professional learning experiences? (cont'd)	<b><i>Desired</i></b> evaluation process to promote growth through feedback and professional development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timely Feedback for Professional Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frequent feedback</li> <li>• Observation</li> <li>• Multiple Feedback opportunities</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Feedback for Professional Learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunistic</li> <li>• Focused on growth</li> <li>• Driven by goals</li> <li>• High expectations</li> <li>• Reflective</li> <li>• Research-based</li> <li>• Proven</li> <li>• Conversation driven</li> <li>• Collaborative</li> </ul>